The sociology curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation: A case study in two South African universities

by

Bothwell Manyonga

This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements in respect of the Doctoral degree qualification
in
the Centre for Development Support
in the
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
at the
University of the Free State

01/12/2016

Supervisor: Prof Melanie Walker

Co-supervisor: Dr Merridy Wilson-Strydom

Co-supervisor: Dr Sam Fongwa

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I, Bothwell Manyonga, declare the following:

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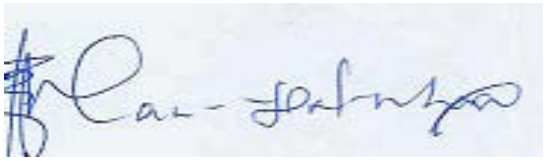
Signature: 

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my special appreciation and thanks to my supervisor Professor Melanie Walker, and my co-supervisors Dr Merridy Wilson-Strydom and Dr Sam Fongwa for useful, comments, insights and excellent guidance in writing the dissertation. I would like to thank you for your patience, encouragement and for allowing me to grow as a researcher. I would especially like to thank my colleagues at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED) and in particular the 2014 PhD cohort (Faith Mkwananzi, Patience Mukwambo, Ntimi Mtawa and Elizabeth Ongera) for the stimulating discussions we have had in the last three years. I would also like to thank Dr Oliver Mutanga, Dr Tendayi Marovah, Dr Precious Tirivanhu, Dr L N Venkataraman, Oliver Gore, and Godfrey Makuwaza who supported me in writing, and encouraged me to strive towards my goal. I also would like to give special thanks to all the study participants for volunteering to be part of this research, and also the respective universities and the Departments of Sociology for granting me permission to carry out the research. I would also like to thank Jenny Lake and Lucretia Smith who greatly assisted with final edits and corrections.

Most importantly, I would like to express my appreciation to my beloved wife Petronella Chirawu-Manyonga. She has been my inspiration and motivation for continuing to improve my knowledge and move my career forward. Her intellectual support, encouragement, and unwavering love were undeniably the bedrock upon which the past three years of my life have been built. Her tolerance of my absence from home and her caring for our children Rufaro and Akudzwe is a testament in itself of her unyielding devotion and love. I would also like to express my gratitude to my mother Alice Tsekwende-Manyonga and my brothers, Garikai, Howard, David, and Ishmael and their families for their support throughout. Finally, I dedicate this to my late father, Simon Gwanzura Manyonga. This is what I have become because of your wisdom.

Abstract

The study addresses how the sociology curriculum and pedagogy interact to enhance or constrain students' capabilities and more broadly, human development. More specifically, the research is focussed on how curriculum knowledge acquired by undergraduate sociology students contributes to enhancing their capabilities to live and to act in society. The context is one where universities are under pressure to better align the relevance of their curriculum to the needs of the labour market, with less focus on expansive aims and more emphasis on outcomes that contribute to both economic advancement and human well-being. While the South African government has invested in the expansion of higher education enrolments and programmes for academic support, there is a need to interrogate how universities enhance or constrain individual and social well-being. Sociology has been chosen as a case subject because there is a growing concern internationally and nationally about the weakening and deepening disregard of the humanities and social sciences within the academy.

Based on Sociology Departments at two South African universities, the research investigates three levels: i) curriculum level to examine what sociology knowledge is selected and why, as well as what valued doings and beings are considered important; ii) pedagogy level to explore how sociology knowledge is transmitted and how (if at all) the process expands capabilities and functionings; and iii) exit level outcomes to consider what students say they have become as a result of studying sociology. The study draws on perceptions from empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with students (11) and lecturers (11) at each university, as well as relevant documents.

The findings suggest that sociology is a subject taken by diverse students across axes of race, gender and schooling backgrounds. Although the students have different bundles of 'resources', the development of the curriculum fails to account for these differences but largely treats them as a homogeneous group. In this conceptualisation, there is limited or no attempt to consider the personal conversion factors that shape each student's freedom to achieve, as well as understand the choices and values that convert these freedoms into actual achievements. Regarding valued capabilities, students and lecturers value capabilities such as knowledge and critical thinking, with the students' having emphasis on capabilities such as economic opportunities, the opportunity to provide or experience good teaching, autonomy and voice, resilience, and recognition, respect and belonging, however, there were limited opportunities for this. All capabilities intersect and are multidimensional, thus students need all of them to achieve well-being as they reinforce and support each other. Subsequently, agency rests on the platform of these capabilities. Thus, equipping graduates with more capabilities, more well-being and more agency means higher education is more just rather than less just or is cognisant of a social justice agenda. The thesis concludes by proposing a capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being. The model suggests grounds for (re)thinking policy orientations to sociology curriculum developers, particularly on how the capabilities approach and the more limited

human capital theory can complement each other in higher education and curriculum development.

Opsomming

Die studie gee aandag aan die manier waarop wisselwerking tussen die Sosiologie-kurrikulum en -pedagogie plaasvind om studente se vermoëns, en menslike ontwikkeling oor die algemeen, te verbeter of aan bande te lê. Die navorsing fokus meer spesifiek op die wyse waarop kurrikulumkennis wat deur voorgraadse Sosiologie-studente bekom word, tot die verbetering van hulle vermoë om in die samelewing te leef en op te tree, bydra. Dit is in ’n konteks waar universiteite onder druk is om die toepaslikheid van hulle kurrikulum beter met die behoeftes van die arbeidsmark te vereenselwig, met minder klem op omvattende doelstellings en meer fokus op resultate wat tot sowel ekonomiese vooruitgang as menslike welsyn bydra. Terwyl die Suid-Afrikaanse regering in die uitbreiding van hoëronderwysinskrywings en programme vir akademiese ondersteuning belê het, bestaan daar ’n behoefte om ondersoek in te stel na die manier waarop universiteite individuele en sosiale welstand versterk of beperk. Sosiologie is as onderwerpgeval gekies omdat daar internasionaal en nasionaal groeiende kommer oor die verswakking en stygende miskenning van die geestes- en sosiale wetenskappe in die akademie is.

Op grond van Sosiologie-departemente by twee Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite, stel die navorsing ondersoek in na drie vlakke: i) kurrikulumvlak om te kyk watter sosiologiese kennis gekies word en waarom, asook welke betekenisvolle handelinge en mense as belangrik beskou word; ii) pedagogievlak om te ondersoek hoe sosiologiese kennis oorgedra word en hoe (indien enigsins) die proses vermoëns en funksionering ontwikkel; en iii) uittreevlakresultate om oorweging te skenk aan dit wat studente sê hulle as gevolg van die bestudering van sosiologie geword het. Die studie maak gebruik van waarnemings uit empiriese data wat versamel is deur middel van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude met studente (11) en dosente (11) by elke universiteit, sowel as toepaslike dokumente.

Die bevindings dui daarop dat Sosiologie ’n vak is wat deur uiteenlopende studente oor grense van ras, geslag en opvoedingsagtergronde heen geneem word. Hoewel die studente verskillende bondels ‘hulpbronne’ het, versuim die ontwikkeling van die kurrikulum om vir hierdie verskille voorsiening te maak en behandel hulle hoofsaaklik as ’n homogene groep. In hierdie konseptualisering, is beperkte of geen poging aangewend om die persoonlike omskeppingsfaktore wat vorm gee aan elke student se vrymoedigheid om te presteer, asook die keuses en waardes wat hierdie vrymoedigheid in werklike prestasie omskep, in ag te neem nie. Wat betekenisvolle vermoëns betref, heg studente en dosente waarde aan vermoëns soos kennis en kritiese denke, met die studente wat vermoëns soos ekonomiese geleenthede, die geleentheid om goeie onderrig te verskaf of te ervaar, selfstandigheid en uitdrukking, veerkrag en erkenning, respek en samehorigheid, beklemtoon; daar was egter beperkte geleenthede hiervoor. Hierdie vermoëns kruis mekaar en is multidimensioneel, dus het studente almal nodig om welstand te bewerkstellig ten einde mekaar te versterk en te ondersteun. Vervolgens berus bemiddeling op die platform van hierdie vermoëns. Om gegradueerdes dus met meer vermoëns, meer welstand en meer bemiddeling toe te rus, beteken dat hoër onderwys meer regverdig eerder as minder regverdig sal wees, of van ’n sosiale geregtigheidsagenda bewus sal wees. Die proefskrif sluit af

deur ’n vermoënsgeïnspireerde kurrikulum-model vir menslike welstand voor te stel. Die model stel gronde aan Sosiologie-kurrikulumontwikkelaars voor vir (her)besinning oor beleidsoriëntering, veral oor die manier waarop die vermoënsbenadering en die meer beperkte menslikekapitaalteorie mekaar in hoër onderwys en kurrikulumontwikkeling kan aanvul.

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Acronyms

AP	Admission Points
CA	Capabilities Approach
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CRHED	Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development
DoE	Department of Education
DoS	Department of Sociology
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EU	Equality University
FET	Further Education and Training
FoH	Faculty of Humanities
HCT	Human Capital Theory
HD	Human Development
HDI	Human Development Index
HEIs	Higher education institutions
HoD	Head of Department
IU	Inclusive University
MoE	Ministry of Education
N.D.	No date
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NPHE	National Plan for Higher Education
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme

NQF	National Qualification Framework
UFS	University of the Free State
TVET	Technical Vocational Education and Training

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

> "The challenge for our time is to renew the purposes and institutions of democracy, which allows citizens to participate in the creation of a society that enables each to develop as a person but also to contribute to the good of the community as a whole". (Ranson 1994: 103)

This chapter contextualises the research by setting the scene, providing an overview of curriculum developments in higher education[1] since the end of the apartheid system. I also explain why I chose to focus on curriculum design[2] in South Africa. The chapter also provides an outline of key policy interventions that discuss and continue to affect curriculum and pedagogy in higher education, specifically focussing on issues of human capital, human development and capabilities formation. The chapter seeks to provide a rationale for why I focussed on South Africa and sociology in particular, whilst providing the research aim, questions and scope of the study. It further explains my positionality with regards to the research.

1.1 Setting the scene

Curriculum transformation discourse has been reinvigorated with the rise of complex global changes taking place in higher education (Ogude et al. 2005). These global changes and developments create a particular set of educational threats and opportunities for different countries. Broadly, the changes have resulted in increased demands for specialised knowledge for development, innovation and problem driven science (Shay 2014). This led me to raise questions about the purpose of university education and more particularly what knowledge is worthwhile. For example, Coate (2009) questions whether national, regional or international concern should be the main focus of university curriculum. This suggests that university curriculum development is faced with the challenge to either meet or satisfy local demands or to better align their relevance to the needs of globalisation (Costandius and Bitzer 2015).

In the last few decades we have also seen the emergence of the managerial culture which reinforces Human Capital Theory (HCT) (Clarke and Newman 1997). Within HCT, the main goal of higher education is directed towards preparing students for jobs that the global economy requires (Boni and Walker 2013, OECD 2008). Boni and Gasper (2012) argue that

[1] 'Higher education institutions' and 'universities' will be used as generic terms to cover the diverse establishments providing higher education.

[2] In this study, curriculum design refers to the end product of a process that involves the organised preparation of whatever is going to be taught, how it is delivered and what students should know and do after the learning experience. The term 'curriculum' is also used to refer to both curriculum and pedagogy.

HCT reductionism comes from a narrow vision of the activities, products, and objectives of the university and a narrow vision of what a knowledge society is. In this context, most curricula tend to respond to market demands, focussing less on expansive Human Development (HD) goals (Drèze and Sen 2013). HCT has put pressure on disciplines which do not necessarily equip students with skills deemed necessary for the world of work. This critique does not mean that we should look down upon the importance of employment, because students and parents bring these expectations to the university. However, the argument allows me to raise concerns on how some disciplines, such as sociology are deemed to be less useful to society and thus placed at the periphery (Garraway 2009). Under these circumstances, curriculum design is viewed as an urgent matter, yet under-researched and neglected in public debate in higher education (Barnett and Coate 2005, Goodson 2014). As higher education systems are required to be more inclusive, more diverse across institutions and more imaginative in their course offerings, a need to examine what the undergraduate curriculum entails arises (Barnett and Coate 2005).

The decision to focus on this area of research has also been influenced by debates on the forces that are currently shaping the curriculum in South African higher education. The context and nature of South Africa's democracy to a large extent requires us to understand how the discourse of transformation has influenced curriculum and pedagogy (Costandius and Bitzer 2015). The South African higher education has been sensitive to the injustices that were created by the apartheid system. In an endeavour to correct the injustices in higher education, the South African government initiated a number of interventions which brought to an end apartheid higher education.

The pre-1994 education system was characterised by fragmentation along racial lines with large variations in quality of education provided. It was designed to maintain and reinforce white supremacy and black subordination (Uys 2010). The universities were defined along racial lines and ethnicity, the Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAIs) and Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) were clearly defined, with the former being allocated better financial and academic resources (Cloete et al. 2004). The under-representation of black students, especially women in particular subjects and at post graduate level, was prominent. Academia and white collar jobs were dominated by white males whilst black men were given enough education to serve the interest of the dominant whites (Uys 2010). In the early post-1994 years, therefore, the main focus was transformation, with emphasis on

providing access to previously marginalised/disadvantaged groups, especially the black (African) population and women (CHE 2013).

Since 1994 higher education enrolments for the previously marginalised/disadvantaged have increased exponentially by 80%, to constitute 59% of total enrolments in higher education (DHET 2011). Recent statistics show that there are a million students in public HEIs, which represents an exponential growth from the half million in 1994 (CHE 2016). Black people have more access to higher education and their enrolment has doubled to 67%, with the headcount of black students now 80% of total enrolments in higher education (DHET 2011). This shows that there has been a significant increase in the enrolment of previously marginalised/disadvantaged groups in higher education. Yet, the participation rates for black and white students still differ significantly – 55% for whites and 16% for African students in 2013 (CHE 2016:6). While the South African government has been investing in the expansion of higher education enrolments, national cohort studies estimate that one in four (undergraduate) students in contact institutions graduate in the required time, and that less than 50% of enrolled students graduate within five years (CHE 2013:15). Fisher and Scott (2011), in a report commissioned by the World Bank to identify skills and technology gaps in South Africa, state that while enrolment and attainment gaps have narrowed across different race groups, the quality of education for the vast majority has remained poor at all levels. Higher education therefore tends to be a low-participation, high-attrition system in South Africa (CHE 2013).

Moreover, the South African context (in terms of poverty, unemployment, and inequality) puts pressure on students who come to university with the desire to get qualifications and skills to render them employable (Fongwa and Walker 2017) so that they can earn an income as opposed to them only being ‘good’ people in the society. As compared to Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET), the university is still regarded as a better option to acquire a qualification that will enable one to get a job. These nuanced tensions between acquiring knowledge for the good of the society and for economic reasons relate to students’ freedom to be and do things that they value and what the university is doing in terms of advancing HCT in higher education. This is important, particularly in South Africa where first-generation students have pressure to graduate and get jobs to support their families (Rogan and Reynolds 2015). As Walker (2007) points out; the economic dimension should not be undermined amongst students, hence the need to interrogate in that respect.

More recently, there has been interest in the decolonisation of the curriculum and its relevance after twenty years of democracy. The interest follows student protests calling for the removal of colonial memorabilia, for example, the #Rhodes Must Fall[3] and the #Fees Must Fall[4] movements that triggered debate about decolonisation of education and structural change in South African universities (Pillay 2016, Shay 2016). The decolonisation debates comprised issues of undergraduate curriculum change and how it is no longer fit for its purposes. Shay (2016) questions whether the curriculum is relevant and if it responds to the needs of diverse students. Shay (2016) further argues that professional curricula[5] have shifted to problem based or problem centred ones, which raises concerns of the balance and sequence of theory and practice, among other issues. Other issues raised within the banner of decolonisation include the arguments that the curriculum preserves values of white supremacy, racial hegemony, and raise the point that student voices are not valued in curriculum design, which contributes to the reinforcement of society's broader inequalities (Shay 2016).

Internationally, in her address before the Royal Irish Academy at Trinity College, Harvard President, Drew Faust raised important points, inter alia, that:

> If we define higher education's role principally as driving economic development and solving society's most urgent problems, we risk losing sight of broader questions, of the kinds of inquiry that enable the critical stance, that build the humane perspective, that foster the restless scepticism and unbounded curiosity from which our profoundest understandings so often emerge. (Faust 2010)

Not only does the concept of global economy have the potential to distort the role of universities in the twenty-first century but it puts pressure on higher education curriculum to move towards producing graduates with attributes that contribute to economic development.

As previously stated, these developments have implications for and pose a threat to the conceptualisation of the curriculum in higher education in South Africa and demand an interrogation of the academic mandate going forward. I see this as a quantitative picture of a systemic failure which requires us to dig deeper into the challenges that higher education is facing. The global changes in higher education, the emergence of a managerial culture,

[3] Rhodes Must Fall is a movement determined to decolonise institutional structures at University of Cape Town through the removal of Cecil Rhodes statue.
[4] Fees Must Fall is a protest movement in response to university fees increment in South Africa.
[5] Professional curricula include areas of study such as health sciences, engineering and law (Shay 2016).

relevant graduate attributes and low throughput rates all have implications for the design of curriculum in higher education. Before we move forward, we need to better understand how the government has responded and what the policy says about curriculum and pedagogy in higher education.

1.2 South African higher education context and reflections on curriculum policy areas

In the dawn of a democratic South Africa, the higher education field experienced expansion in line with transformation discourse but the last five to ten years have seen neo-liberal principles being applied to the sector. The neo-liberal approach has influenced a global shift to 'knowledge-based economies' that led to national and institutional curriculum debates about how best to prepare graduates for a knowledge economy (Shay 2015). In this context, higher education policy articulated transformation through the structure and frameworks of higher education, and provided new educational policies and legislation, while also linking the functioning and outputs of the sector to national priorities and socio-economic development (Carrim and Wangenge-Ouma 2012). Curriculum and pedagogy issues have, to some extent, been overshadowed by issues of equitable distribution, representation, access and participation. In most cases, curriculum discussions are incorporated in quality debates, efficient teaching and learning discussions (Lange 2015) or are mentioned in policy documents with little or no depth on what it entails at institutional, programme, classroom level or individual level. Although issues of equitable distribution, representation, access and participation are dominant, the thread of the desire to steer South Africa along a 'high skills, high growth' path of economic development is evident in reports (Ensor 2006:180). However, compared to other aspects of higher education, there has been less systematic policy attention to curriculum over the last two decades (Ensor 2004). According to CHE (2013), some universities initiated curricula review to take account of development in disciplines and professions. While efforts to restructure curricula show that some institutions are being proactive, the outcomes may be a response to immediate market needs of the new global economy (Ogude et al. 2005: 1). In particular, it is not clear how curriculum fosters capabilities and prepares students for a variety of roles in a capitalist society.

Although social, political and economic inequalities have largely shaped and continue to shape higher education (Badat 2004), the South African higher education sector implemented reforms as noted earlier in pursuing comprehensive higher education transformation post 1994 (Cloete 2004). The focus was and continues to dwell on providing access to previously

disadvantaged groups, especially the black population and women (CHE 2013). For example, the focus was on the developmental needs as summed up in the Reconstruction and Development programme of 1994:

i) Meeting basic needs of people,

ii) Developing our human resources,

iii) Building the economy, and

iv) Democratising the state and the society. (Cloete et al. 2004: 3)

It was imperative for higher education to be responsive to the development needs of a democratic South Africa (Badat 2004), but the predominant focus of the redress of injustices caused by apartheid left little or no room for interrogation of the higher education curriculum (Lange 2015). Notions of education for economic gain started to emerge in the early 1990s, as emphasis was put on 'building the economy'. This implies that the policy was a suggestion for skilled manpower to contribute to economic development.

Reforms and other change initiatives in the higher education system during the early years of post-1994 have been further informed and guided by five key documents: The National Commission on Higher Education report; A Framework for Transformation (NCHE 1996); Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education (DoE 1997) and the National Plan for Higher Education (MoE 2001). The NCHE report contained three sets of ideas or 'pillars', namely, increased participation, greater responsiveness and increased cooperation and participation (Carrim and Wangenge-Ouma 2012, NCHE 1996). The report focussed more on curriculum issues than any policy documents that followed. The NCHE report highlighted the tensions between the local and the global shaping the curriculum, as well as on academic programmes' responsiveness to the developmental needs and challenges of the country (Lange 2015). This means that South Africa faced the pressure to redress the socio-political and economic needs of people who have recent memories of apartheid, yet it also needed to participate in the sophisticated global economy (Ensor 2006). The outcome of this debate was credit exchange[6] and disciplinary discourses[7] which influenced the structure of higher education curriculum (the Mode 1 and Mode 2 debate is discussed in Chapter 2). The credit accumulation and transfer (CAT) system was geared towards preparing graduates with high skills required for the world of work. In relation to the aforementioned Ensor stated that:

[6] Credit exchange discourse fragments curriculum into modules that students can fit together.

[7] Disciplinary discourse organises the modules to achieve an apprenticeship.

> a key characteristic of this was the modularisation[8] of the curriculum and description of modules in terms of outcomes that can be matched and exchanged as part of a process of accumulating credit towards academic qualifications. (Ensor 2006:182)

The discussions of poor quality education and training particularly for black people, and the need to overhaul learning programmes culminated to the establishment of the South African National Qualifications Framework (NQF)[9]. The NQF is an instrument for the development, classification and recognition of skills, knowledge and competencies along a continuum of agreed levels. The NQF was intended to ensure the overhaul of all learning programmes and curricula, and it offered a way of structuring existing and new qualifications, which are defined by common (and hence comparable) learning outcomes (SAQA 2012).

The design of an NQF requires the development of a framework of levels with descriptors for each level. The levels describe the generic nature of learning achievements and the complexity and/or depth of achievement, and the learner's autonomy (SAQA 2012). Each level of the NQF is described by a statement of learning achievement, known as a level descriptor (see Appendix 8 for a sample of a level descriptor). Each level descriptor provides a general, shared understanding of learning and achievement at each level (SAQA 2012). The South African NQF comprise three separate but linked frameworks—one for higher education, one for schools and technical vocational education and training, and one for trades and occupational education. Higher education qualifications occupy six levels of the NQF, namely, levels five to ten. Levels five to seven comprise undergraduate qualifications and levels eight to ten accommodate postgraduate qualifications. Students graduating with a Bachelor of Social Science degree or Bachelor of Arts exit at level seven. The level of descriptors are useful when designing new programmes of study, writing learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessing prior learning, and incorporating non-traditional learning into award-bearing courses (SAQA 2012). In addition, they are vital when modules, or short courses, need to be related to accreditation and when learning at different levels needs to be compared (ibid). This implies that when lecturers are designing curriculum they must be consistent with these NQF descriptor requirements.

The NQF system offers clear statements of what the learner must know or be able to do, which in this case is skewed towards employability. Carrim and Wangenge-Ouma (2012)

[8] Modularisation of curriculum has the function of disaggregating traditional extended courses; the specification of outcomes allows modules to be evaluated against each other for purposes of equivalence (Ensor 2004).

[9] The objectives of the NQF as set out in the Act establishing the South African Qualifications Authority.

pointed out that the NQF emphasises the need to integrate education and training to allow for greater possibilities for mobility as well as career development pathways. Lange (2015) argues that the impact of the NQF was the outer form of the curriculum and not a reflection on knowledge. Ensor (2004: 340) argues that the NQF advances the interest of policy to remove three sets of boundaries: between education and training; between academic and everyday knowledge; and between different knowledge's, disciplines or subjects within the academic domain.

The attempt to transform higher education to produce graduates who can contribute to economic development is common in most of the early policy documents (Badat 2007). In 1997, the Department of Education (DoE) released the 1997 'White paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education', which reflected tensions between the need to produce graduates who can contribute to economic development and the political imperatives to redress historical injustices (Gultig 2000). The White Paper calls on higher education to contribute to South Africa achieving political democratisation, economic reconstruction and development, and redistributive social policies aimed at equity. The White Paper places emphasis on twin goals: equity and development. One of the aims of this paper/policy was to establish, a single, national co-ordinated system, which would meet the learning needs of citizens and the reconstruction and development needs of society and the economy (DoE 1997). This implies that transformation has been conceptualised to contribute to the political and socio-economic needs of the citizens (Dowling and Seepe 2003). The role of education has been in human resources development, high level skills training and production, acquisition and application of new knowledge but also very much on justice and educating a critical compassionate graduate (DoE 1997). The Department of Education's National Plan of 2001 leaned more towards efficiency, responding to the dominant economic agenda of the Growth Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR) of 1996. The National Plan of 2001 recommended a steering mechanism for higher education to deal with mechanisms and initiatives with respect to institutional audit, programme accreditation and quality promotion and capacity development (Badat 2007). It outlines the six pillars of higher education and one of these emphasises economic development that is producing the necessary graduates for social and economic development in the country.

The common thread in these documents is that South African higher education responsiveness to the redress of past inequities took place in a context where the need to

produce graduates with high level skills to service the new, global innovative society was high on the agenda. Thus, we can argue that the traditional roles of universities (knowledge production for its own sake) were being redefined in the context of the global knowledge economy, although social justice concerns persisted as a policy 'thread'.

The prioritisation of science subjects over the humanities and social sciences has also become more pronounced in state steering. The links between higher education graduates and employment is also emphasised. Underlying the debates are contested issues of race, which has foregrounded the discussion and debates of the need to de-colonise the curriculum. The reports which directly or indirectly addressed curriculum issues include a report on Transformation in the Higher Education Sector in South Africa (2008); the Post Education and Training Systems 2012 Report; White Paper 2013; A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa, and the National Development Plan (NDP 2011). The Report on Transformation in the Higher Education sector in South Africa (2008), also known as the Soudien report, written for the Department of Education (DoE 2008), mainly focussed on the racial profiles of the staff and student populations in South Africa. However, the report raised important concerns regarding limited change to university curriculum in responding to the needs of the new (black) incoming students. The Green Paper (2012) provides a vision for post compulsory education in South Africa. It calls for a single, coherent, differentiated and highly articulated post-school education and training system (DHET 2012). One of the striking issues is the continued link between the knowledge economy (DHET 2012: 13) and the educational output in terms of the highly skilled labour force (DHET 2012: 83). In 2013, the DHET released the White Paper on education, which sets out strategies to improve the capacity of the post school education and training system to meet South Africa's economic and social needs (DHET 2013). Unlike the previous reports, the White Paper stressed the need to assess graduate production in terms of quality, equity and quantity (DHET 2012). At this point, the focus starts to shift from expansion to quality, with focus on what kind of a graduate gets employed. However, the 2013 White Paper does not replace the 1997 but they work together. Unlike the 2007 White Paper, the 2013 paper puts more emphasis on employment, although social justice concerns are nonetheless evident.

The most relevant report that focussed on the undergraduate curriculum is the report by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), 'A proposal for undergraduate curriculum reform in South Africa' (2013). The report was produced after the realisation and claim that universities

enrol high school graduates that exhibit performance levels that are below the expected average performance. This implies that when students enter university they are not adequately equipped with key skills to cope with university (CHE 2013). In addition to this, concerns about the alleged mismatches between current graduate attributes and the broader needs of society and the economy have been raised. It is against the alleged background of mismatches between current graduate attributes and the broader needs of society and the economy, combined with high attrition rates with 40% dropping out in the first year, low throughput (between 30-47% in 2010) and low graduation rate (17% in 2010), that the CHE in South Africa appointed a Task Team to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the implications of potential curriculum restructuring, focussing on South Africa's current undergraduate curriculum (CHE 2013: 9). After extensive research, CHE recommended that the three year degree structure be extended by one year, as a way of addressing the high attrition rates and improving graduate outcomes. These interventions were intended to ensure that under-prepared students were catered for through the re-arrangement of knowledge structures and the provision of an extra year:

> The Task Team proposes the introduction of a new undergraduate curriculum structure with the following three fundamental elements: Duration increase the 3year degrees and diplomas to 4 years, Flexibility: those competent to finish the degree in 3 years should be allowed to do so, standards- retain or improve upon existing exit standards through utilising the additional curriculum space afforded to ensure realistic starting points. (CHE 2013: 20)

This suggests that the existing undergraduate curriculum structure, content and pedagogy needed attention for a substantial improvement of graduate output and outcomes. The CHE recommendations, though useful, seem not to address or focus on curriculum content and pedagogy, which are also important in addressing some of the challenges that higher education faces in South Africa. However, Lange (2015) does point out that the acceptance of epistemological access as a problem has resulted in the creation of academic development programmes offered to students who need extra help to succeed in higher education. But she suggests that the provision of epistemological access is the task of the university and not of academic development structures/centres. Lange (2015) further argues that the extended curriculum is more focussed on what the students cannot do than on what university lecturers cannot do.

Further research by the CHE revealed that graduate output has not kept pace with the country's needs in terms of the quality of graduates and their ability to take forward the socio-economic development of the country (CHE 2013). This suggests that the curriculum does not enable the main goals of higher education to be fully achieved and that more curriculum space is needed to produce graduates with appropriate attributes for the changing needs of South African society (CHE 2013). Attention is also drawn to teaching staff as they are in charge of designing the curriculum in higher education. For example the South African National Development Plan highlights the need for staff development and to reinforce tutorship programmes (NPC 2011). It emphasises the need to increase support for staff development initiatives to improve the teaching skills of academic staff.

The recurring point is that higher education policy has mainly focussed on the redress of the apartheid injustices, developmental issues and producing graduates with skills to contribute to economic development. Although these issues are linked to curriculum and pedagogy, they have not been the focus of systematic attention at national, institutional or classroom level (Lange 2012). Since higher education enrolments have improved in South Africa, as pointed out earlier, there is a need to shift attention to realigning the curriculum and pedagogical arrangement in the context of promoting social justice (participation, access, rights, well-being and freedom of students) in universities.

Curriculum is regarded as one of the main pillars in re-imagining the higher education in the twenty-first century; questions remain whether the undergraduate curriculum offered adequately addresses perennial questions:

i) What counts as legitimate knowledge and hence, the contents of what is taught, why, and who determines what?

ii) How knowledge is delivered?

iii) What are the main student development outcomes of the curriculum?

iv) Are student expectations linked to what they are learning?

My research argues that in order to address key challenges going forward, we need to better understand what students value or have reason to value, how the curriculum is developed by lecturers, what outcomes they set out to achieve and if the curriculum outcomes speak to students' expectations.

1.3 Statement of the problem

In South Africa, as is the case elsewhere, curriculum change has emerged as an issue of interest in the context of higher education expansion and quality learning. Extended curriculum interventions are being implemented to address student under-preparedness and low graduation rates (CHE 2013). Although there is an increasing body of literature on teaching and learning (Graaff 2004, Luckett 2009, Shay 2014) and epistemology (Muller 2000, Morrow 2009), there has been less discussion on curriculum design and capabilities formation through students' engagement with knowledge.

While the South African government has invested in the expansion of higher education enrolments and programmes for academic development support, there has been less focus on how curriculum has been designed to meet the new demands of diverse student cohorts. Educational interventions in South African higher education, for example, extended curriculum programmes, seem to target student under-preparedness and improved graduate rates and do not adequately address concerns about graduate attributes. The global context is one where universities are under pressure to better align the relevance of their curriculum to the needs of the labour market, while a managerial culture has reinforced a reductionist HCT to education. Related to this, there has been a growing concern about the weakening position and disregard of the humanities and social sciences in South Africa (ASSAf 2011) and internationally (Nussbaum 2010). Moreover, Apple (2003) argues that curriculum is not neutral and may or may not contribute to social justice because of political, cultural and economic forces which influence it. This requires us to examine why students are learning what they are learning. Curriculum research needs scrutiny, even in the post-apartheid era where the discourse of transformation appears to be strong (Hoadley 2011).

Based upon this context, the study examines whether the sociology curriculum enhances or constrains students' knowledge, skills and the requisite understanding for them to live meaningful, productive and rewarding lives. The study proposes that human development and a capabilities-inspired curriculum would offer students real opportunities, expanding choices for individuals to be what they value to be and to do, while further orienting them to a critical view of society and their contributions to both social and economic development.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study encourages ongoing conversations about the sociology curriculum and suggests a way to conceptualise curriculum in human development terms. It thus builds on and

contributes to literature on higher education curriculum and pedagogy studies and the field of university education which has critical links to social justice. The results of this study could influence policy on undergraduate sociology curriculum in universities in South Africa.

The capabilities approach, which views education as a basic capability that affects the development and expansion of well-being, throws a fresh light on the curriculum for the transformation of higher education. The greater economic focus and the business-like approach in universities call for research to understand the new role of universities in the twenty-first century. This can be achieved through studying curriculum and pedagogy from a human development and capabilities approach perspective. The significance of the study resides in its contrasting of the capabilities approach and HCT concerning curriculum content, knowledge selection and pedagogical transmission and how these contribute to the students' enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world. Within the contrast, we can reasonably learn what a capabilities approach lens can contribute to the theoretical, methodological and practical development of the sociology curriculum for undergraduates. It further introduces student and lecturer voices on the challenges facing sociology teaching and learning.

Although the capabilities approach is emerging as a normative lens in examining education, the HCT remains the dominant ideology that informs and evaluates education. The focus of the investigation was to obtain a better understanding of what is reasonably valued by undergraduate sociology students, whilst advancing the notion that university education should provide students with real opportunities to live meaningful and productive lives including but not limited to economic advancement.

1.5 Motivation for using sociology as a case

To understand the design of curriculum the research uses sociology as a case subject. Sociology was considered because there is a growing concern internationally (Nussbaum 2010) and nationally (ASSAf 2011) about weakening humanities and social sciences within the academy, and a deepening disregard of humanities in society (Jacklin and Vale 2009). Sociology is a discipline that traditionally helps people understand their social circumstances, thereby providing them with better chances of controlling their circumstances. It is a subject that is conventionally imbued with both intellectual and social ambition (Ritzer and Stepnisky

2014). It has also been considered because it is one of the disciplines in social science[10] that have real public value as exemplified by Brewer:

> The normative public value of social science is that it nurtures a moral sentiment in which we produce and reproduce the social nature of society, enabling us to recognise each other as social beings with a shared responsibility for the future of humankind through understanding, explaining, analysing and ameliorating the fundamental social problems stored up for us. (Brewer 2013: 159)

In South Africa before the 1960's, sociology was described as a service discipline to the racially segregated apartheid regime (Webster 2004). In the 1960's, there were divisions between White Afrikaans-speaking universities pro-apartheid sociology and oppositional radical sociology in both Black and White universities that were against the apartheid regime (Webster 2004, Jubber 2007). In the 1970's, the emergence of Marxist sociology, largely influenced the discipline and since then, sociology has been projected as a discipline that challenges racial discrimination and inequalities that were perpetuated by the apartheid regime (Jubber 1983, Webster 1985). Sociology academics have argued that the discipline has declined in South Africa, influenced among other things by the global collapse of the left, fragmentation of social movements which had fought apartheid, rising student numbers, shrinking social science departments, the loss of key academics to government and consultancy, falling salaries and, most importantly, conflicts and contradictions in government policy about the strategic focus and the public role of the social sciences in general (Uys 2010). On the other hand, although academic study does not seem to lead to changes in practice, the sociology curriculum in universities covers topics such as race, poverty, inequality, and unemployment, which are some of the major socio-economic problems that South Africa faces today. This is best summed up by Faust (2010) who argues that the capacity for analysing, interpreting, for making meaning and making sense out of the world around us is at the centre and fundamental to the humanities and social sciences.

1.6 Research aim and questions

The overarching aim of the research is to build a case for a capabilities-inspired sociology curriculum and pedagogy. The study examined how the curriculum knowledge acquired by undergraduate sociology students'[11] enhances or impedes students' capabilities to live and act

[10] The field of sociology falls under the social science academic faculty in most South African universities. In South Africa, the social sciences are embedded within the Humanities academic disciplines.

[11] Sociology students refer to both undergraduate and honours students. Honours students were included to share their previous undergraduate experiences.

in the world. The study sought to understand what students' value or have reason to value and what lecturers considered and valued when designing the curriculum in a context where learning for the sake of learning is rapidly shifting towards learning to increase one's income so as to live a better life.

Drawing on concepts such as capabilities, functionings, freedom, well-being, conversion factors and agency from the capabilities approach, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

i) What understandings of sociology as an academic discipline inform the development of curriculum and its operationalisation in the teaching of sociology at undergraduate level in the case study university department? What student functionings are valued by sociology lecturers in constructing a curriculum?

ii) To what extent are curriculum intentions aligned with pedagogical approaches?

iii) In what ways does curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contribute to enhance or constrain their capabilities to live and act in the world? What functionings (and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree?

iv) In which way can a capabilities approach lens contribute to the theoretical and practical development of the sociology curriculum for undergraduates?

1.7 Methodology

The study sought to build a case for a capabilities-inspired sociology curriculum and pedagogy using the insights drawn from i) Human development and capabilities literature on curriculum; ii) Interviews; and iii) The analysis of sociology curricula across two South African universities. Using sociology departments at two South African universities, the research is investigated at three levels: i) Curriculum level where I examine what sociology knowledge is selected and why, as well as what valued doings and beings are considered important; ii) Pedagogy level where I explore how sociology knowledge is transmitted and how (if at all) the process expands capabilities and functionings; and iii) Curriculum outcomes level where I interrogate what students say they have become as a result of studying sociology. The study draws on perceptions from empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with students (11) and lecturers (11) at two case studies.

1.8 Perspective and positionality

A reflection of my personal experience, research and academic background stimulated my quest to undertake sociology curriculum studies. Although I did my undergraduate degree in Zimbabwe, my experience and interaction with undergraduate sociology students in South Africa made me realise that sociology graduates in both countries face common challenges and that there is something missing in the design of the curriculum.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology and psychology in 2003. It is not by coincidence that I ended up in the humanities and social sciences but it was a logical growth which was predetermined by academic strength. When I completed my Advanced level (Cambridge), I studied Arts subjects (English, Divinity and Shona) because I attained better grades in these subjects. Thus, I knew clearly that I belonged to the humanities and social sciences. When I enrolled for my undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to choose a major from a number of subjects that included but were not limited to English, psychology, sociology, economics, and geography. I deliberately chose to major in psychology and sociology as I was not sure about the subject that I really wanted to major in between these two. I was fascinated by the idea of becoming a psychologist and my shallow research at that time had indicated that sociology was an easy subject with potential to boost the cumulative grade point average. At graduation I was not sure of what I had become in terms of graduate attributes and how I was going to use my newly acquired qualification to navigate the complex demands and expectations that confronted me. I had always wanted to work with people and was fortunate enough to find research work in the non-governmental sector. When I joined the world of work, our line manager took time and effort to train me and my workmates who were also sociology graduates because she claimed that we did not possess the minimum skills to deliver in the job we had been hired for. My former classmates faced challenges to find work and I attributed this to the weakness of the curriculum which can be summed up as: i) Lacked knowledge and content to cultivate human skills such as critical thinking, research skills and analytical skills; ii) Introduced students to broad topics of two majors, without digging deeper; and iii) Wrong/uninformed choice of degree studied.

During my master's degree in Development Studies at a South African university, I worked as a writing tutor in Humanities. My duties involved providing one-on-one tutoring at the drop in centre with students on every aspect of their writing process. During the course of my work, many students indicated to me that they did not know why they were learning what

they were learning. Most of the students (including sociology students) that sought help could hardly write good English, they struggled to critically articulate questions, and I strongly suspected that they did not value what they were studying. This attracted my interest in understanding more about what and how these students were being taught, their interest in the humanities courses, as well as the lecturers' attitudes.

In spite of this, it must be emphasised that my subjectivity in relation to me being a Bachelor of Arts graduate in psychology and sociology did not negatively affect the rigour of my findings. Although I approached the students as a person who also studied sociology at undergraduate level, the interpretivist paradigm used in this study stresses the need to put analysis in context and is concerned with understanding the world from subjective experiences of individuals. Findings or knowledge claims are produced as investigation proceeds, emerging through dialogue in which conflicting interpretations are negotiated among members of a community.

1.9 Chapter outlines

Turning to the remaining chapters of the thesis, the second chapter is a literature review. The chapter starts by providing contested definitions of curriculum, and pedagogy and the definitions adopted for this study and the reason for choosing them. In the second part, I look at literature on the process of developing, implementing, and assessing curriculum, and pedagogy and why they need change. In the process, I contrast alternative paradigms to curriculum design, and pedagogy, while justifying use of capabilities approach. The third part highlights what we already know about sociology curriculum and pedagogy in South Africa and the literature on capabilities, curriculum and higher education.

The third chapter provides the capabilities approach conceptual framework through which the research illuminates and advances weaknesses of curriculum design in higher education, with particular emphasis on sociology. Because of HCT influence in informing curriculum, a decision was made to use the more expansive capabilities approach as the framework which is based within the rubric of human development paradigm. The chapter details what the capabilities approach as developed by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000) and by several others, offers to curriculum design and the valuable insights it provides on how university education could be improved through offering curriculum knowledge that may contribute to the enhancement of students' capabilities. Capabilities core concepts are discussed and how they can be used to examine curriculum issues.

The fourth chapter presents the methodology (used in this study), conducted within an interpretative constructivist paradigm based on participants' words, action and documents, in an effort to make meaning and draw conclusions on the sociology curriculum. Data was collected from two South African university departments using semi-structured interviews. The research participants were sociology lecturers and honours students who had completed undergraduate studies in the case study under review. Purposive sampling was employed for lecturers as information-rich cases were targeted. Exhaustive sampling was used for students as eligible students were few.

The findings chapters are organised as follows: Chapter 5: Equality University (EU) student perspectives, Chapter 6: Inclusive University (IU) perspectives, Chapter 7: EU lecturer perspectives, Chapter 8: IU lecturer perspectives. Thus the results chapters are separated by participants and university, for example, students' perspectives at EU are presented as a stand-alone chapter with a discussion on what the results mean and how they fit into the existing literature at the end. This allowed logical analysis of empirical data. Direct quotes from participants are used to support emerging themes throughout the chapters.

Chapter 9 ties together the background, context, theoretical framework, and analysis drawn from the in-depth interviews. In this chapter, I reflect upon what the research sought to uncover, the theoretical and methodological contributions made to the development of the sociology curriculum, as well as the implications of this study. Finally, in Chapter 10, I present what can be done to both theorise and promote just and equitable higher education through curriculum, contributions of the study and limitations.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided background information about the global forces that influence the design of curriculum, how curriculum policy has been framed in South Africa. I further introduced the theoretical framework on which the study is based and outlined the development of my interest in curriculum and pedagogy, particularly sociology curriculum. Justification on why sociology has been used as a case study was also provided. I have indicated what I set out to achieve in this study, and how this was be done. In Chapter 2, I focus on the literature review.

Chapter 2: Exploring higher education curriculum for human development

> "Definitions of the word *curriculum* do not solve curricular problems; but they do suggest perspectives from which to view them". (Stenhouse 1975: 1)

2.1 Introduction

In the first part of this chapter, I explore literature on the definitions of curriculum, and pedagogy, highlighting key texts and debates taking place internationally and in South Africa. In so doing, I seek to identify the gaps in research, with relevance to the South African context. In the second part I look at literature on the process of developing, implementing, and assessing curriculum, and pedagogy and why they need change. I also contrast alternative paradigms to curriculum design, and pedagogy, while justifying the use of the capabilities approach. The third part highlights what we already know about sociology curriculum and pedagogy in South Africa and the literature on capabilities, curriculum and higher education. The main argument in this review is that sociology knowledge acquired through the curriculum should equip students to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding which, in turn, enables them to make contributions for the good of society. This is in keeping with the underlying concern of this research which focussed on advancing a capabilities-inspired curriculum that promotes valuable learning towards human development and one that is just in educational terms.

Since the study sought to examine how the curriculum knowledge acquired by undergraduate sociology students' contributes to enhance or impede students' capabilities formation, most of the literature drawn is linked to human development and the capabilities approach and for comparison other curriculum paradigms are discussed briefly. Three reasons stand out for this decision. Firstly, I ascertain the most widely published definitions of core concepts in the field of curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation and justify working definitions adopted. Secondly, literature has been reviewed with the desire to discover authoritative theoretical paradigms that continue to influence curriculum design, while highlighting the advantages of designing curriculum from a capabilities point of view. Thirdly, I seek to identify the gaps in research, with relevance to the South African context, and capabilities.

2.2 Defining curriculum and pedagogy

To begin, I review the definition of curriculum. Since the concept of curriculum is broad, complex, dynamic and highly contested, the first need is to clarify what I understand by the term and the same applies to the definition of pedagogy. Traditional definitions regard

curriculum as an official (university) document that provides educational goals and outcomes (Brennan et al. 2010). As a noun, curriculum dwells on an intention understanding of curriculum in systems of education, and it largely limits curriculum planning objectives to questions about the selection and organisation of knowledge and measuring outcomes (Bernstein 1975, Tyler 1949, Taba 1962). This view constructs curriculum as a technical exercise, thus narrowing education to being a limited and technical activity.

Alternatively, curriculum can be understood as a verb, that is, as a process involving the interaction of teachers and students in classrooms and other social contexts, rather than as a set of documents (Doll 1993, Slattery 1995). Apple (2003) argues that curriculum is a political act that does not always contribute to social justice, implying that it can be retrogressive. A curriculum further reflects what kind of knowledge is considered important in a given society. He argues that curriculum is produced out of cultural, political conflicts and tensions, and is not neutral:

> The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selection, and some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. (Apple 1996:22)

Seeing curriculum as a contextualised social process raises critical philosophical, social and political questions about what is taught, how and to whom and with what effects (Apple 2003). Elsewhere, a view from the Bologna process[12] emphasises that the design of curricula need to foster teaching methods that promote the learning of competencies and skills that are needed in tomorrow's economy (Schik 2005). This suggests that the curricula's main focus is to equip graduates with skills that are deemed necessary for the labour market. This kind of definition, that puts more emphasis on developing skills for the economy, overlooks an important dimension that encourages graduates to be oriented to the needs of the twenty-first century and also contribute to the public good and human development (Taylor 2008). Barnett and Coate (2005) argue that curriculum is often in a reductive form that emphasises generic skills development and economic benefits at the expense of more humanistic agendas. They propose instead a schema that consists of three domains of knowing, acting and being to foster the development of human beings who are able to flourish amidst uncertainty and challenge. According to their proposal, these three domains make up curriculum but what differs is the extent to which the domains are integrated with each other.

[12] The Bologna Process is a series of ministerial meetings and agreements between European countries designed to ensure comparability in the standards and quality of higher education qualifications.

Knowing, acting and being can have different weightings and each curriculum should give due attention to each domain in an interconnected way. They point out that 'being' is the most important of the three dimensions (that is knowing, being, and acting) in that without it, the others cannot be realised, though it is often neglected. However, the proposal fails to adequately address how the dominant managerial culture in higher education will be countered. In the absence of meaningful intervention, the integration of the domains (knowing, being and acting) can still be skewed towards instrumentalism[13].

The above viewpoints show that curriculum is a multi-dimensional concept. This suggests that it cannot be approached in a simplistic manner, which further indicates that definitions of this construct vary according to point of departure. A definition which brings us close to the human development perspective states that curriculum is "a proposal setting out an educational plan, offering students socially valued knowledge, attitudes, values, skills and abilities, which are made available to students through a variety of educational experiences, at all levels of the education system" (McKernan 2008: 12). Since this study revolves around capabilities formation, the understanding given by Kandiiko and Blackmore (2012) guided the study. They state that the study of curriculum covers four areas: content (what of curriculum), process of organising the knowledge - pedagogy (methods of teaching and learning), and lastly assessment and outcomes. This understanding allows the interrogation of three concepts of the curriculum: how knowledge is legitimised, how it is transmitted and its acquisition by students. But what is still lacking in this definition are the contextualisation factors, curriculum outcomes and the absence of relevant stakeholder participation in designing curriculum, for example, the students. Kelly (2004) argues that curriculum should offer much more than a statement about the knowledge-content or merely the subjects which schooling is to 'teach' but justification of the purposes of such transmission and an exploration of the effects that exposure to knowledge and subjects is likely to have, or is intended to have, on its recipients (Kelly 2004). In other words, the purpose of education should be to provide students with the opportunity to learn how to catch fish in a dam rather than to 'spoon-feed' students with fish.

Pedagogy is also a contested term that examines how content is transmitted. Bernstein (2000: 78) describes pedagogy as:

[13] Instrumentalism refers to the concept that education help a person achieve economic opportunities.

> a sustained process whereby somebody(s) acquires a new form or develops existing forms of conduct, knowledge, practice and criteria from somebody(s) or something deemed to be an appropriate provider and evaluator – appropriate either from the point of view of the acquirer or by some other body(s) or both.

Alexander (2001) defines teaching as an act and pedagogy as both an act and a discourse. He connects the act of teaching with culture, structure and, political aspects (Alexander 2001: 540). For pedagogy, Walker (2006) argues that if higher education curriculum is grounded in human development, the pedagogical arrangements shift from being a technical aspect of just transmitting knowledge to being an ethical project. Walker defines pedagogy as:

> A method of teaching in the widest sense which extends beyond the role of the teacher to include what is taught, who are taught and the contextual conditions under which such teaching takes place. (Walker 2006: 11)

Walker further suggests that pedagogy is an ethical project concerned with democratic issues of people's well-being, creative thinking, engaged learning and values, among other issues (Walker 2006). Her definition recognises the need to take cognisance of the fact that pedagogical arrangements involve power relations between teacher and students, students and students and above all the societal and institutional power (Ibid). Her concept of pedagogy introduces the importance of higher education's contribution to equitable, just humane democracy (2006:18). For example, if critique of society is in the curriculum, we can ask how that would be aligned with pedagogies which develop critical thinking. Walker's pedagogy encompasses the moral and ethical aspects of teaching and looks beyond didactics (teacher's technical role), and hence was adopted for this study.

The definitions of curriculum and pedagogy might appear clear but they are not. The separation of the two in a lecture room might be difficult. While the curriculum is the content that must be taught, lecturers have significant responsibility for, and control over, how the curriculum is presented and delivered. For example in practice, an inspired and talented lecturer can energise dull content and find ways to link it to lived experiences/biographical methods (delivery of content as an ethical project) to ensure that a 'core' of sociology remains intact and sociology is reproduced in students while an unmotivated, talented and knowledgeable lecturer can compromise the appeal of the most relevant and imaginative curriculum by poor, unimaginative delivery. In light of this, the relationship between curriculum, pedagogy and assessment has been explored through the data in this study.

2.3 Debates about higher education curriculum and pedagogy

There are several debates relating to education, curriculum and pedagogy in literature and this section highlights key ones around globalisation, higher education expansion, curriculum philosophy and the contestations around higher education as a public or private good.

Over the years, there has been an ongoing debate about the merits of expansion and massification of higher education (Mohamedbhai 2008). Internationally, the discourse of the higher education sector is dominated by concerns about 'massification'[14] and globalisation while in Africa the concern is more about expansion and globalisation (CHE 2016). Globalisation and competition between nations has seen knowledge become an important factor in the determination of wealth (Taylor 2008), whilst on the other hand the pressures of expansion and massification have added large numbers of students to most institutions.

The standard way of thinking views expansion of higher education as a setback in promoting student learning, quality education, and consequently as a challenge to socio-economic development (Hornsby and Osman 2014). Some are convinced that contact between lecturers and students is critical for the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge, mainly where there is a significant knowledge gap between lecturers and students (Allais 2014). If contact is compromised large class learning may be void of any pedagogical value (Hornsby and Osman 2014). However, although large classes pose a challenge to contact between lectures and students, they also give an opportunity for lecturers to be innovative with regard to relevant pedagogy for large class settings. For example, the changing nature of higher education demands and internationalisation has seen the emergence of Massive Open On line Courses (MOOCs). While to some MOOCs expand educational opportunities, others view them as a challenge to existing models of higher education and as a low-quality for traditional learning. In contrast, massification is associated with increased pressure of efficiency and quality, and loss of exclusiveness (Bloom et al. 2005, OECD 2008, World Bank 2002) and democratisation of education, access to knowledge and a social justice agenda (Altbach 1992, Arvanitakis 2014). Others have associated higher education expansion with evidence of improved health, empowerment, and economic development (World Bank 2002). Arvanitakis (2014) views massification in the light of its transformative and engagement potential, and challenges Allais' previous work by arguing that quality education, particularly the transfer

[14] Massification is a term used to describe the rapid increase in student enrolment that was witnessed towards the end of the twentieth-century.

of knowledge, is not restricted to university environments alone and can exist in large class environments, if lecturers are willing to adapt and be resourceful.

Debates also continue about the public versus private good of education and higher education (Bloom et al. 2005). As a public good, students are educated to become productive citizens whereas as a private good, education primarily benefits individuals who can earn more money and enjoy other benefits as well (Bloom et al. 2006). The debate is that if education is a private good then students who benefit from it should fund their studies but if education is a public good, then society has a responsibility to provide financial support (Altbach et al. 2009). Recent rate of return analysis shows that African graduates have the highest rate of return to tertiary education and in particular South Africa has the highest in the world (Cloete 2016). Due to the ideology of education as a private good, many countries have shifted the financial responsibility to students and their families. In such a setting, students become consumers and universities become producers (Walker 2010). This suggests that education is regarded as a marketable commodity. For example, fee pegging is determined by market forces and tuition fees for disciplines deemed less important in the knowledge-based economy are charged less (Taylor 2008). A performativity culture has led to an increasing emphasis on private goods yielded by higher education at the expense of the broader social purposes of higher education (Singh 2002). In essence, universities are being called upon to become more responsive to the needs of a knowledge based economy (CHE 2002, Ensor 2004, Griesel 2004, Shay 2014). Under these circumstances, the broad role of the university is being narrowed or redefined. Universities compete for students, they aim to make profit, and there is an increase in accountability structures which also monitor the performance of the many aspects of the academic field (Altbach 2008). In the Global North, massification is associated with increased pressure of efficiency and quality and loss of exclusiveness, among other things (Teferra and Altbach 2004). Whilst this is also true in the Global South, privatisation and expansion of education has occurred without an accompanying increase in financial, physical, and human resources which has had a direct impact on the physical infrastructure, the quality of teaching and learning experience, research, and quality of life of the students (Mohamedbhai 2008, Hornby and Osman 2014). Most public universities now receive a smaller proportion of their budgets from government (Altbach 2008). For example, between 2000 and 2012 total state contribution to higher education funding in South Africa declined from 49% to 40%, while the contribution from student fees rose from 24% to 31% (DHET 2012). This has far reaching consequences in terms of quality, particularly in a

context where under-prepared students require additional support to cater for foundational conceptual gaps (Shay 2017).

The debate about education being a public good or a private good can be positioned within the larger debate about the function of higher education. As Drèze and Sen (2002: 38-40) point out education can play several roles. Firstly, education can have an instrumental personal economic role. Within this approach, the main goal of higher education is directed towards preparing students for the jobs that the economy offers and most higher education curricula and pedagogy appear to respond to employability and market demands at the expense of expansive human development (Walker 2012). HCT is a financial investment which views education yielding economic returns (Unterhalter 2010). It presumes that education develops certain qualities in people and these qualities enhance economic development just as an increase in physical capital or investment does (Becker 1962, Keeley 2007, Unterhalter 2010). Within this theory, education perceives people as the means to an end of economic productivity so that students are educated to be economic producers, consumer-citizens and entrepreneurial selves (Unterhalter 2010, Walker 2010). Thus, education is important because it creates skills and helps to acquire knowledge which allows workers to be more productive, thereby being able to earn a higher wage (Robeyns 2006). This is important, especially in South Africa where levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality are high. HCT is therefore central to economic development efforts for individuals, nations and the globe at large. The instrumental roles of education are not limited to economic roles only but there are also non-economic instrumental roles. At the personal level, one could think of having access to information by being able to read the newspaper or a medical instruction leaflet, being knowledgeable about issues of health, reproduction and contraception, and so on (Robeyns 2006). At the collective level, the non-instrumental roles of education include that children learn to live in a society where people have different views of the good life, which is likely to contribute to a more tolerant society (p.71).

However, the HCT of education has numerous problems. HCT theorists refer to the economic well-being of people and societies, which is important but inadequate. They place an emphasis on the role of higher education in the transformation of human beings into human capital, and instrument of production and economic growth as a way of achieving economic well-being (Schultz 1972, Becker 1975). The HCT is too economistic and it cannot adequately deal with some non-instrumental issues such as culture, gender, identity,

emotions, history and so forth (Davis 2003, Fine 2002). In its context, social returns and the intrinsic value of education are of less importance than its instrumental and private value (Psacharopolous 1996).

Secondly, education can be intrinsically important. A person may value knowing something simply for the sake of acquiring that knowledge. This means that education and knowledge can be treated as ends. For example, some people find the study of foreign languages, even when one is unlikely ever to use them (Robeyns 2006). There is a common consensus among scholars subscribing to the capabilities approach that putting emphasis on utilitarian purposes of higher education misses the point of providing curriculum that can shape individuals to live enriching and productive lives (see Chapter 3 for capabilities approach core concepts definitions). This includes but is not limited to the instrumental value of education (Sen 1999; Nussbaum 2006; McLean 2006; Walker 2008; 2013 Boni and Gasper 2012). As Sen (2009) contends, economic development is a means to an end which is human development. There is evidence to suggest that education builds healthier, richer, more equitable societies (Peercy and Svenson 2016). However, the HCT approach has become more aggressive with policies that pose a challenge to (higher) education. Talik (2003) argues that new values, policies and practices are replacing the old ones. In this light, market-driven policies are replacing social democratic values and government subsidies (Ibid). As a result reductive discourses of employability and well paid global citizen in a global workforce are given priority in the curriculum over other aspects that are important for human development and flourishing lives (Walker 2012). Higher education institutions, therefore, cannot afford to sell pre-packaged skills and formal knowledge to student 'consumers' without taking into account the socio-historical context of student lives in combination with the socio-economic realities which await students outside of higher education spaces.

Given the contrasting positions of HCT and HD, the study argues that the design of curriculum only based on economic benefits is inadequate as universities run the risk of prioritising private achievement over a collective good (Unterhalter and Walker 2007). While economic responsibility and stability are important, they should be among the many facets that ought to be directed towards human well-being (Wood and Deprez 2012, Drèze and Sen 2013). It is therefore, proposed that the curriculum be examined from a human capabilities based perspective that is not only concerned with increasing people's skills, but rather takes a broad conception of human and economic well-being. The research's argument is that the

capabilities approach could shed fresh perspectives on how the curriculum and pedagogy of higher education might be transformed through combining elements of HCT and other dimensions which center on developing the human being.

As previously stated in Chapter 1 (see Section 1.1) scholars in South Africa have debated the effects of higher education expansion since 1994. Although expansion contributed much to the redress of race and gender equalities in admissions with black[15] student enrolments reaching 80% of total higher education enrolment in 2011, as compared to 55% in 2004 and female enrolments reaching 57% in 2011, as compared to 45% in 2004, there are still several challenges associated with these developments. Concerns about the mismatches between current graduate attributes and the broader needs of society and the economy have been raised (NPC 2012). High dropout rates, low success rates and poor quality of teaching are the problems that are associated with expansion in undergraduate degree programmes in South Africa (CHE 2013 and 2016). The CHE task team proposed a flexible curriculum structure based on extending formal time in university for undergraduates by one year. The argument for reviewing curriculum structure sounds reasonable since it addresses student under-preparedness but it still falls short of addressing quality issues directly connected to the curriculum content and pedagogy issues. Similarly, McLean (2006) argues that, regarding higher education as providing employment skills only is pedagogically misinformed "because it relates to a technical rational interest only, instrumental versions of 'communication skills' do not amount to an interest in the social world" (p. 66).

What has been discussed in this section can be illustrated diagrammatically. The arms that in/directly affect the curriculum are: markets, discipline, state (as discussed in Section 1.2 in Chapter 1) and profession.

[15] 'Black' here is used to refer inclusively to African, Coloured and Indian.

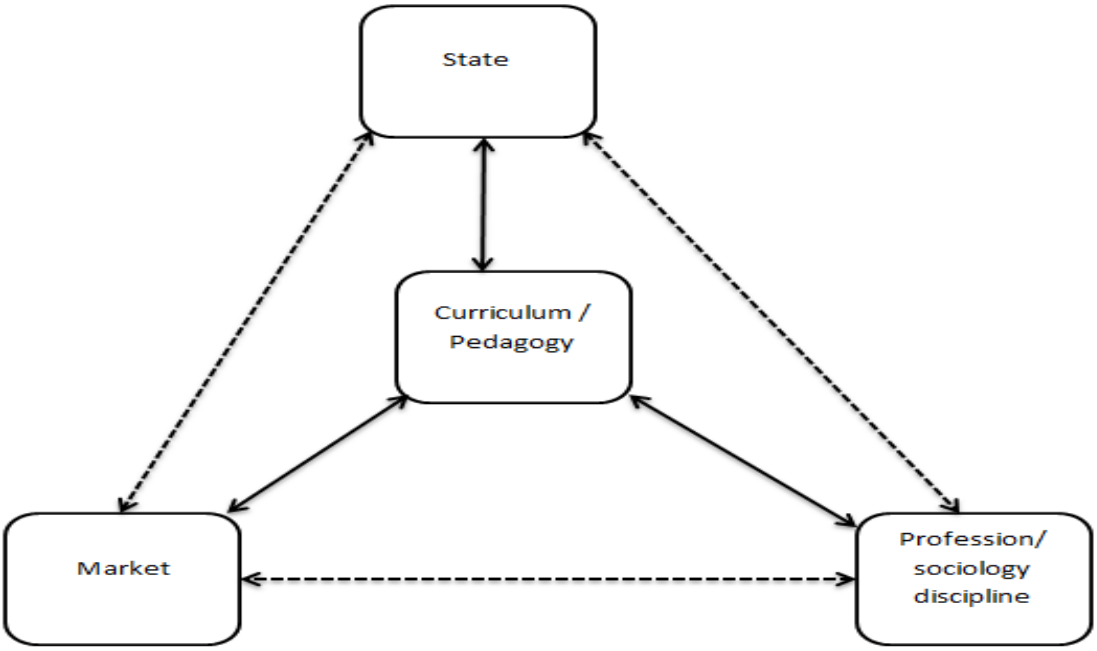

Figure 2.1 Arms of curricula

Overall, the state publicly funds public universities and it provides a policy and regulatory environment in which markets, disciplines and professions interact (see Section 1.2). The state, the markets, through the managerial culture and professional organisations such as the South African Sociological Association (SASA) seem to influence how the curriculum is framed. The dotted lines show that some interaction takes place between the state and profession; state and market, as well as the interaction between the market and profession.

2.4 Mainstream approaches to curriculum development

To provide context for my use of the expansive capabilities approach, I provide a synopsis and analysis of a body of literature on philosophy and curriculum paradigms[16] that exists. The intent is to outline some of the possible designs available and discusses what informs curriculum development; the process of developing, implementing and assessing; and why it would need to change. The second part focusses on pedagogy conceptualisation in the context of social change.

Curriculum development is a carefully and consciously exercise made by lecturers in higher education. As a practical matter, curriculum decisions need to be made skilfully based on an

[16] Paradigms comprise assumptions about learning and teaching, the nature of reality, knowledge, intelligence, inquiry, discourse, the naming of problems and approaches to problem solving, as well as social and political values (McKenna 2004: 215).

accumulated situational understanding on the part of the lecturer on learning outcomes. As such, it is a personal, social, political and theoretical exercise as MacDonald suggests:

> I suspect that in many ways all curriculum design is political in nature; that is, it is an attempt to facilitate someone else's idea of the good life. By creating social processes and structuring the environment for learning, curriculum design is thus a form of "utopianism," a form of political and social philosophizing and theorizing. If we recognise this, it may help us sort out our own thinking and perhaps increase our ability to communicate with each other. (1975: 293)

Due to lack of consensus on curriculum philosophy, the term 'philosophy' is used interchangeably with hierarchical paradigm and theory/approach to refer to approaches that inform curriculum development.

2.4.1 Curriculum philosophy and hierarchical paradigms

Philosophy (referred to as hierarchical paradigm(s) hereafter) is important as it shapes key curriculum trends and informs educational decisions on how curriculum is understood and designed. A hierarchical paradigm is the starting point in any curriculum decision making and is the basis for all subsequent decisions regarding curriculum. They set criteria for determining the aims, selection, organisation and implementation of the curriculum in the classroom. Hierarchical paradigms help us answer general questions such as: i) What are universities for; ii) What knowledge is valued; and iii) How should students learn the content?' Hierarchical paradigms for curriculum development can be generally categorised into three paradigms: traditionalists, reconceptualist, and critical theory. Although broad and general distinctions can be made among these three perspectives, they do not exist separately from one another. Before I discuss the three broad perspectives, I briefly summarise four sources for curriculum development.

McKernan (2008) identifies four sources for curriculum development: i) Epistemological curriculum; ii) Learner based; iii) Objectives-based (technical-scientific); and iv) Society and problem-centred. Epistemological curriculum makes reference to its epistemology; and its knowledge or subject base. This has generally come from two basic forms: the traditional disciplines, or forms of knowledge approach and 'fields of knowledge', defined by their subject knowledge, rather than their distinctive 'form', for example, sociology and psychology. The advocates of the epistemological approach argue that these disciplines and subjects will develop appropriate character and qualities of mind (Kelly 1989). The learner based approach argues that the curriculum development is based on the needs, interest and

human development of the student. Curriculum development should centre on the experiences, interests, and abilities of students (Dewey 1922). Students are exposed to a more democratic curriculum that recognises accomplishments of all citizens regardless of race, cultural background or gender. Society and problem-centred curriculum is based on the difficulties of living, the problem-centred development attempts a form of life-adjustment education using personal, group and institutional issues and problems. Curriculum addressing social problems such as racism, inequality, terrorism and so on would fall within this design (McKernan 2008).

The traditional paradigm[17] which has dominated curriculum design for decades assumes that curriculum helps to maintain society by socialising young people into values of achievement, competition and equality of opportunity (McKenna 2004, Wolf 2006). Thus, functional knowledge is deliberately created and transmitted to reinforce societal norms and values. Durkheim (1977) argues that behaviour is regulated to accept the general moral values through curriculum and hidden curriculum in higher education. Within this paradigm, the power structure that perpetuates societal stratification is subtle as compared to critical theory (McKernan 2008). Knowledge is neutral and is acquired through observation (Guba 1990). Curriculum knowledge is narrowed towards producing graduates with skills to contribute to economic development (Bobbit 1918, Parsons 1961).

The re-conceptualistic paradigm[18] views curriculum as a social construction in which there is no single reality or truth. A reconceptualist views curriculum as an inescapably political as well as intellectual act (Pinar 1981). This view considers socio-cultural and historical circumstances in the validation of knowledge or truth. As noted by Grundy (1987), curriculum is not just a collection of materials that students work through; rather, it could be thought of as a cultural product that arises through social interactions (1987). This implies that the curriculum is a reflection of cultural dialogue in a given context and it is not neutral (McKenna 2004). The paradigm analysis of curriculum and pedagogy questions perceived pedagogical truths as part of a strategy of challenging injustices produced through the institutions, practices, and knowledge structures of education (Foucault 1975, Beakley 1991). Rather than trying to expose curriculum as representing the interest of the elite, reconceptualists focus on the processes, procedures and apparatus wherein truth, knowledge and beliefs are produced. While the paradigm criticises and questions reality, reconceptualists

[17] Theories such as positivist and structural functionalist belong to the traditional paradigm.
[18] Post-structuralism, post-modernism and phenomenological all fall under the reconceptualist paradigm.

differ from critical theory in that they suggest that power does not emanate from a single source but exists in multiple sites and is always subject to negotiations (Gewirtz and Cribb 2009). In critical theory, the aim of the curriculum is to provide knowledge that leads to the emancipation of individuals from the powerful and false accounts of reality whereas reconceptualists aim to deconstruct how the accounts of reality are created in a given context. Reconceptualism is useful in exploring power relations but it has been argued that it cannot investigate issues of distribution, justice and equality (Unterhalter et al. 2007).

The third approach is critical theory which views education knowledge as a theory of social reproduction (Apple 1996, Bruner 1996, Freire 2000, Giroux 2002, McLean 2006, Young 2010), which seems to be working in the interests of the elite groups and appears to be reinforcing prevailing power relationships and inequalities (Bowles and Gintis 1998, Apple 2004). Critical theory is influenced by Gramsci's (1971) analysis which illuminates the ways in which social control can be achieved without dominant groups depriving the majority. Prominent scholars within the critical theory paradigm (Adorno 1973, Habermas 1989, Horkheimer 1993) emphasised that there is a direct relationship between the requirements of capital accumulation and the curriculum. Critical researchers argue that education should interrupt social class hierarchy that reinforces inequality but that is difficult to achieve hence it becomes important to understand contesting forces that shape curriculum (Freire 1970, Apple 2003, McLean 2006). Curriculum is further influenced by various factors that include but are not limited to: the values of the teacher; tradition, available resources, related knowledge, the students' interests, and abilities as well as school policy (Woods 2013). Thus, rather than ask whether students have mastered a particular subject matter and have done well on common tests, this research asks a different set of questions to determine the motive and justification of curriculum construction: Whose knowledge is this? How did it become 'official'? What is the relationship between this knowledge and those who have cultural, social and economic capital in a society? Who benefits from these definitions of legitimate knowledge and who does not? What are educators doing to change existing educational and social inequalities to create curricula and teaching more socially acceptable?

While generally paying much more attention to power and conditions in schools than those associated with HCT[19], the approaches (with the exception of learner based approach) to curriculum development outlined above fail to take into account people's well-being,

[19] See Section 2.2 for limitations of the HCT.

individual experiences, values and differences within groups, and how one might develop a complex capability-inspired curriculum for sociology undergraduates. Although the different theories raise important aspects of the curriculum, it remains necessary to investigate the sociology curriculum from a capabilities formation perspective because it is concerned with human diversity within unjust structures and it looks at individuals and social arrangements within a framework of justice and equality (Unterhalter et al. 2007). For example, unlike the capabilities approach which advocates for social justice in different forms, the weakness of the traditional paradigm ideology is that it assumes that education is fair and that it rewards the best. The traditional paradigm tends to reproduce inequalities within societies that may restrict students to realise their potential. In addition, there is limited student participation in class. In contrast to Sen's concepts of public deliberation and collective reasoning, the paradigm excludes students' participation in curriculum and pedagogy design.

2.4.2 Pedagogy conceptualisation

There is a substantial body of literature on pedagogy and education and this section focus on specific literature on pedagogy in higher education from two academics, Paulo Freire and Monica McLean (and Paul Ashwin and Andrea Abbas), who have influenced how pedagogy can be conceptualised. Freire (1998) brought to light emancipatory pedagogy or emancipatory education. He argues that education can be both emancipatory and oppressive. His work depicts a picture of colonised society with the colonisers as the oppressor, and the colonised, the oppressed. The oppressed are students who can unlearn their oppression, re-create and transform their realities and liberate their selves, and their oppressors (Freire 1970). Freire recognises that power involves hierarchical relationships to the detriment of people who have relatively less power. The most significant contribution of Freirean analysis is the critique of the 'banking system', described as deposited information that the student passively receives, memorises and reproduces (Freire 1970: 58-59). In opposition to the 'banking system', the capabilities approach analysis investigates whether pedagogical conditions cultivate practical reason (Nussbaum 2011: 39). Therefore, the 'banking system' is not only unjust because it stifles the development of intellectual autonomy and critical consciousness, but also because its invisibility often leaves the individual with constrained access to knowledge as critical capabilities (Freire 1970). Freire's pedagogy aligns with the human development concern with education for socially just ends. This means that graduates who have had access to opportunities to practice democracy in lecture rooms should become

conscientised to the arrangements that shape their learning (Freire 1970) while becoming critically informed about widening global inequalities (Walker and McLean 2013).

In exploration of pedagogy in higher education, McLean (2006) draws on the theories of Jürgen Habermas. She focusses on how university teachers practice pedagogy and how this could be improved to help graduates, as citizens, influence politics, culture and society in the direction of justice and reason (McLean 2006: 160). She challenges the contemporary construction of good teaching and learning as a technical rational pursuit for economic purposes as the measure. She proposes pedagogy characterised in terms of the extent to which students are engaged with academic knowledge in transformative ways. Through good practices in pedagogy, McLean (2006) envisions a graduate who is analytical, critical, and an imaginative thinker who is committed to working with others for the public good. She defines the student experience as "one which allows intellectual, ethical and social progression at the heart of which is communication with peers and teachers and results in communicative reason[20]" (p. 91). In order to develop students who have a deeper understanding of people and society, McLean (2006) argues that learning should not be regarded as the "transmission of knowledge into empty heads" (p. 90) where lecturers act as conduits of knowledge while students are the recipients only (Freire's 'banking system'). She notes that improving pedagogical structure is key to improving the quality of undergraduate courses, for example, through shared responsibility in knowledge production.

To achieve quality education, good practices in teaching an undergraduate sociology-related social science are where:

i) Students have personal relationships with lecturers, who are accessible for questions and who encourage effort and challenge students to work;

ii) Lecturers are enthusiastic; and give feedback which advises students how to improve;

iii) Students are prepared for discussion in seminars and workshops, which should be participative, of a high quality, and academically focussed; and, when the relevance of the knowledge under discussion is made explicit, for example, by way of case studies and real life examples;

iv) Courses are well-designed and that there are varied teaching and assessment methods; and

[20] Communicative reason: people's capacity for arguing with others in an effort to solve social problems.

v) Students feel that they are supported on their courses and by the wider university to overcome obstacles in studying. (Ashwin et al. 2012: 05)

The above shows that good teaching is multi-dimensional and complicated. It involves lecturers having the opportunity to discuss with others about how to assist students understand disciplinary knowledge through the design of curriculum, providing students the opportunity to build relationships with lecturers, and that the students must be able to engage in high quality discussions that enable them to acquire core knowledge (Ashwin et al. 2012, Gibbs 2010, Entwistle 2009). McLean (2006) sums it up by saying that using education as a means of acquiring employment- related skills "strips students of their power to develop minds and to contribute to understanding and knowing how to act in the world" (p. 66- 67).

In light of this, the study argues that the commodification of knowledge can result in some knowledge being marginalised. If, for example, knowledge about social, cultural, political, and ethical issues is minimised in pedagogy, the notion of human development values risk being disregarded. In capabilities terms, what is suggested here resonates with capabilities such as practical reasoning, imagination and thought, affiliation, social relations and networks. The absence of these learning outcomes means that the curriculum constraints on what people can do and be. According to the capabilities approach, graduates should make a positive contribution in the greater society and the inhibition of this capability is a shortcoming of curriculum and the education system.

2.5 What we know about sociology curriculum research in South Africa

There is a considerable amount of literature that has been published on the higher education curriculum in South Africa over the past two decades. South African higher education curriculum reform can be found in the range of competing discourses vying for attention in the early days of post-apartheid higher education policy debates. There are discourses of 'skills' for economic development, of 'transparency' and 'transformation' for equity, of 'relevance' and 'responsiveness' for new modes of knowledge production to name a few (Kraak 2000, Ensor 2004). One of the most heated debates evolved around what Shay (2014) calls the 'false choices' of Mode 1 (discipline-based curriculum) and Mode 2 (context of application transdisciplinary research and problem based curriculum). The distinction between Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge production is that in Mode 1 knowledge is produced within a closed system at universities whereas in Mode 2 knowledge production is developed in an open system where 'producers', 'users' and 'brokers' mingle, and knowledge

production is inter-penetrated by markets rather than in an autonomous space (Gibbons et.al 1994, Scott in Cloete et al. 1997: 35). Thus Mode 2 inspired curriculum addresses problems of social importance or commercial value, and is 'validated' by end-users. It sets up false choices about the purposes of higher education, what it means to be educated and what curriculum priorities should be (Shay 2014). In essence, universities are being called upon to become more responsive to the needs of a knowledge-based economy (CHE 2002, Ensor 2004, Griesel 2004, Shay 2014). This implies that the fundamental challenge with curriculum design is to create a dynamic synergy between formalised knowledge, as practised by scientists in universities, and tacit or experiential knowledge, as practised by professional and skilled practitioners in the work place (Kraak in Cloete et al. 1997: 58-59). The Mode 2 approach to curriculum has been seen by its advocates as a driver for transformation while pointing out that it promotes greater flexibility and is skewed towards producing highly skilled university graduates. In contrast, the Mode 2 approach was criticised for appearing to replace Mode 1 and subject knowledge. Kraak (2000), Muller (2000) critiqued the way in which advocacy for Mode 2 was problematically taken up by curriculum policy in South Africa – providing a platform for curricula to replace foundational knowledge with problem-based curriculum or the way in which generic, transferable skills were foregrounded over disciplinary knowledge. If we may ask, what is more important in designing curriculum? Is it about depth or breadth (Shay 2016: 2), Barnett and Coate (2005) concepts of knowing, doing and being? Gibbon's (2000) Mode 1 or Mode 2, educating the mind or preparation for a vocation (Nussbaum 2010), or Muller (2000) who questions what knowledge is of most worth for the millennial citizen (p. 41). I concur with Walker (2012) who argues for capabilities-inspired curriculum because the life that we live is not only about employability and economic growth.

In recent years, there has been an increasing body of literature on teaching and learning (Graaff 2004, Graaff 2008, Luckett 2009, Shay 2014), and the structure of knowledge in intellectual fields (Maton 2006, Muller 2000, Morrow 2009). Others have published broadly on epistemological challenges associated with approaches to curriculum (Erasmus and Albertyn 2014, Jansen 2002, Kraak 2000, Waghid 2002). Several studies were considered to analyse the implications of knowledge and curriculum structure for learning in sociology, biology and history, using Bernstein's educational theory (Ensor 2004, Gibbons 1994, Kraak 2000, Luckett 2012, Shay 2011). Of particular note is a study carried out by Luckett (2009), which examined the relationship between knowledge structure and curriculum structure for

general sociology major(s) in one university department. She examined what society offers students, what subject positions it constructs for them, looking at the effect of the structure of the knowledge form involved, and the social context in which that knowledge gets turned into a curriculum. Luckett (2009) further explores the role of academics as agents of re-contextualisation to understand the curriculum that society structures for students before they get to act on it. The research used Bernstein's (2000) concepts: the fields of production, contextualisation and reproduction and Maton's (2000) concepts of the 'epistemic device' and 'legitimation codes' to analyse data. Thus, the focus is on how academics incorporate and transmit knowledge that is produced within the field, in this case the social context (and often universities) in the field of reproduction (university schooling). Graaff (2004) carried out research in undergraduate sociology focussing on how to improve teaching. He compared the strengths and weaknesses of teaching undergraduate sociology placing three paradigms of teaching into conversation with each other: the cognitive, the humanist, and the hermeneutic (Graaff 2004, 2007). The cognitive approach points to the emphasis in teaching on skills rather than content, it took more seriously the way in which education tends to replicate inequalities but pays little attention to the affective side of learning (Graaff 2004). The humanist approach points to writers who concern themselves with the freedom and rights of the individual against social structures, the approach is student-centred but tends to gravitate towards naivety in regard to individual self-knowledge (Graaff 2004). Hermeneutics is critical of the humanist approach; the philosophy of teaching is unfamiliar and needs some reworking. Graaff ends up by recommending two main principles of teaching: teaching as careful listening and communication.

While the literature has pointed to important macro curriculum trends (Graaff 2004, Graaff 2008, Luckett 2009, Shay 2014), theoretical approaches used do not consider some important aspects such as students' achieved well-being (functionings), interpersonal comparisons of the freedom to pursue well-being (capabilities), diversity amongst individuals and conversion factors that enable or inhibit individuals (Sen1992). The conceptual framework for this study allows me to focus on the micro individual well-being, thus the beings and doings that each student has reason to value, diversity among students and conversion factors. The study endeavours to connect curriculum and pedagogy to capabilities formation and what could be learned for sociology curriculum and pedagogy. It argues that if we want to support education and hence curriculum learning that is valuable to human development, recognition of

capabilities formation ought to be included as a curriculum lens. Below, I now turn to empirical studies to see how the capabilities approach has been operationalised.

2.6 Literature on capabilities, curriculum and higher education

This section provides a brief overview of how the capabilities approach has been applied in higher education and particularly in designing the curriculum. A common consensus among scholars subscribing to the capabilities approach is how we evaluate, judge and possibly achieve social justice in higher education (Bozalek and Leibowitz 2012). The work illustrates the inherent value of this approach to research on curriculum and pedagogy and how the framework could be applied to influence policy in education. With the exception of McLean (2009, 2013) and her colleagues in the United Kingdom, less research has been conducted to evaluate the undergraduate sociology curriculum and pedagogy from a human development perspective. Thus, a dearth of literature exists in that regard, particularly in the South African context.

As previously discussed (see Section 2.6), McLean, Abbas and Ashwin (2013) investigated quality and inequality in pedagogy and curriculum social science degree courses[21] in United Kingdom (UK) universities (McLean and Abbas 2009, McLean et al. 2013). They questioned the widely-held assumption that lower status universities offer a worse quality education than higher status universities by investigating the relations between what students bring to university, their experiences of university education and what they gain from and value about these experiences. In doing so, they evaluated the extent to which processes of teaching and learning in formal educational systems reproduce or interrupt social hierarchies. Using Bernstein's pedagogic rights[22], they demonstrated how pedagogic rights assist us to better understand how processes of teaching and learning in formal education systems reproduce or interrupt social hierarchies. They argue that combining the concepts of human capabilities and access to pedagogic rights can provide an analytic framework to evaluate pedagogic efforts aimed at human development. Whilst their study was focussed on the Global North, my study offers perspectives from the Global South. My study therefore introduces to the analysis the normative aspects of the capabilities approach based on human development values and suggests a more nuanced way to design a sociology undergraduate curriculum that

[21] Sociology, social policy and criminology modules.

[22] Three pedagogic rights refers to enhancement (the right to the means of critical understanding and seeing new possibilities); inclusion (the right to be included socially, intellectually, culturally and personally); and, participation (the right to participate in the construction, maintenance and transformation of social order) (McLean et al. 2009).

could enhance capabilities that are valued by students, teachers and relevant stakeholders. Thus, the capabilities approach does not only examine how the pedagogic rights are developed but how they can be best implemented (Wilson-Strydom 2014). As Walker (2006) suggests, pedagogical rights are more helpful when evaluating the extent to which students have the potential and opportunity to function in terms of specific capabilities in a given context.

The number of studies that have operationalised the capabilities approach has been increasing in the last few years but most have little or no focus on sociology curriculum and pedagogy. Some authors have been interested in aspirations and achievements of young people who chose not to enter higher education to address the relationship between capability and higher education (Watts and Bridges 2006). They contest the widespread view that low aspirations and achievement prevent young people from entering higher education. Broadening aspirations research, Hart (2012) applied the capabilities approach and Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital and field to analyse data on how young people in secondary school perceive their aspirations in the light of a critical analysis of policies to widen participation in education. Another case of the capabilities approach use is by Boni and Gasper (2012), who examined the quality of education in higher education. Following the drive for neoliberal education, they advance the notion of evaluating quality of education based on human development orientations. They draw on the work of other scholars and the capabilities approach to propose a matrix based on the roles of university and human development values to conceptualise quality in higher education. They identified university activities that include teaching, research, social engagement, governance/university policies, and university environment. Boni and Gasper (2009) argue that the framework stimulates debate and complements existing university evaluations that do not consider human development dimensions in their quality evaluations. Taking a different approach, Wood and Deprez (2012, 2013) examined the curricular implications for the capabilities approach when teaching for human well-being. The two argue that market pressures have negatively affected efforts of curriculum reform in higher education and they examine what would education look like if the individual well-being of every student was the key aim. Integrating capabilities approach with emancipatory approaches (democratic education and critical pedagogy feminist pedagogy), they argue that students ought to learn what matters to them.

In South African literature, Walker (2012) advances a capabilities approach to curriculum design and proposes that human development and capabilities should be applied to university education, and specifically to guide and evaluate curriculum and pedagogy. Wilson-Strydom (2011, 2015) examined issues of access, participation and social justice in higher education. She argues that increasing access without examining chances of success can lead to a new form of exclusion. She proposes that issues of access ought to be approached from a capabilities perspective which provides a means of fostering access for social inclusion (Wilson-Strydom 2015). Others have focussed on student voices in higher education for example, Calitz (2016); Wilson-Strydom (2015), Loots and Walker (2015) and, Walker 2016, focussed on race and ethnicity in education. The capabilities approach has also been used to examine graduate attributes in the South African context by Bozalek (2013). She uses a case study of the University of the Western Cape to illustrate ways in which the capabilities approach could be used to develop alternative conceptions of graduate attributes based on an idea of human flourishing, the social good and students' and lecturers' needs. Loots and Walker (2015) seek to advance capabilities gender equality in South African universities. They explore a conceptualisation of gender equality and methodological considerations in policy developments in the advancement of gender equality and social justice. Walker and Loots (2016) explore the potential of the capabilities approach to inform policy formation and argue for the development of a policy for higher education institutions based on opportunities for valuable functionings as the informational basis for gender equality. Research on universities and employability using the capabilities approach has also been done (Walker and Fongwa 2017).

The common thread of all these studies is that increasing access without sufficient attention to creating meaningful opportunities of participation, learning and success is leading to new forms of injustices in higher education. The topics that have been researched cover most issues in the country, they however, do not show us how some of these issues are addressed through the curriculum. For example, a study on student access focusses on the injustices of enrolment but it does not unpack the nuances of how the under-prepared students are assisted or not through the curriculum. It would be difficult to argue that student should learn for the sake of learning. Students need qualifications that can give them a competitive advantage on the job market. This makes both social and economic sense, but one of the arguments being advanced in this research is that students could benefit more if human capital was subsumed into emancipatory and transformative education which could lead them to flourishing lives.

2.7 Conclusion

A growing body of (capabilities approach) curriculum literature shows that curriculum informed by the human development principle can lead to real freedom to choose education one has reason to value, advances capabilities and hence functionings for flourishing lives, and people become critical agents who can be engaged in moral and ethical debates. While previous work on curriculum and pedagogy offers a rich resource for human development, less research has focussed on sociology curriculum, and none that particularly examined sociology curriculum using a human development perspective from the Global North. This study is relevant as it seeks to foreground a curriculum that advances the intrinsic value of higher education, whilst still acknowledging the important instrumental roles that higher education plays in economies and societies. Having discussed the literature, the next chapter focusses on the capabilities approach as conceptual framework and how its concepts were applied in the analysis of data that was collected.

Chapter 3: Capability approach, curriculum design and social justice: Theoretical perspectives

"The most practical solution (to a problem) is a good theory". (Einstein)[23]

3.1 Introduction

In Chapter I outlined how I would use the capabilities approach to examine the design of curriculum and pedagogy. I now address questions such as: Why would students, lecturers or policy makers be possibly interested in using the capabilities approach? As the question indicates, this chapter provides the motivation for using the capabilities approach over other approaches and is aimed at starting a conversation among people involved in curriculum design in different fields and particularly undergraduate sociology. I begin by expanding the introduction of the capabilities approach that has been briefly done in Chapters 1 and 2. I also explain the constituent elements of the capabilities approach and how they relate to each other. Thereafter, I proceed to show how my research asked questions about functionings, capabilities and agency in relation to the sociology curriculum. The next section discusses what the capabilities approach offers to curriculum and pedagogy in higher education. The section discusses the notion of curriculum as a potential instrument of social justice. Following on this is a section on dimensions indicating how they have been used in examining curriculum in different areas.

3.2 Constituent elements of capabilities approach

In relation to the sociology curriculum and pedagogy, I use the capabilities approach to ask questions about capabilities, functionings, agency and conversion factors. These central concepts can help us think how we can design the curriculum.

3.2. 1 Capabilities and functionings

The main constituents of the capabilities approach are functionings and capabilities. Capabilities reflect one's freedom to choose valuable alternatives of what "could be" (Foster 2016). The focus is on the freedom that a person actually has to be this or to be that – things that he or she may value doing or being (Sen 2009: 232). Put differently, capabilities are choices and opportunities available to individuals to lead the lives they value or they may have reason to value (Sen 2009: 232). A capability reflects the various functioning bundles

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Einstern[23]: Epigraph, without citation, in Eberhard Zeidler, Applied Functional Analysis: main principles and their applications 1995.

that an individual has the freedom to choose from to live the life they value or they might have reason to value (Sen 1997, 1992). What is of significance is the point that all formulations of capabilities have two parts: freedoms and valuable beings and doings (functionings) (Alkire and Deneulin 2009). Freedom is valuable for two reasons: firstly, freedom offers people real opportunity to achieve what they value and have reason to value (capability; opportunity aspect). The concern here is the ability to achieve rather than the process of achieving that which needs to be achieved. Secondly, freedom has a process aspect such as the ability to act on behalf of what matters (agency; freedom as an aspect) (Table 3.1). In that sense, capability reflects real notions of freedom or opportunities people have to lead or achieve a certain type of life.

> A person's advantage in terms of opportunities is judged to be lower than that of another if she has less capability – less real opportunity – to achieve those things that she has reason to value. […]. The concept of capability is thus linked closely with the opportunity aspect of freedom, seen in terms of "comprehensive" opportunities, and not just focussing on what happens at "culmination". (Sen 2009: 231-232)

The freedom aspect is important because individuals differ in what they value. People might have the same opportunities but will reach different functionings. Firstly, the freedoms and opportunities depend on combining personal abilities and the political, social and economic environment (Nussbaum 2011: 20). Secondly, people might have different choices. A case in point is when, for instance, one voluntarily decides to embark on a fasting exercise which is absolutely different from forced starvation (Sen 1992: 52). Put differently, capability is the various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that the person can achieve (Sen 1992). In Sen's words, "a set of vectors of functionings reflects the person's freedom to lead one type of life or another." (Sen 1992: 39-40).

University education can contribute to what Sen calls 'functionings', the various things a person may value doing or being (Sen 1999: 75). A functioning reflects 'what is', thus the current achievements of a person. In other words, functionings are valuable activities and states that lead to the realisation of capabilities. Functionings are intuitive and intrinsic in the sense that that they are valuable to a person and not just instrumental (Walker 2006). Examples of functionings include working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community and being respected (Robeyns 2005). The difference between capability and functioning is the one between an opportunity to achieve and actual achievement (Walker and Unterhalter 2007). Capabilities reflect one's freedom to choose valuable alternatives whilst

functionings reflect "*what is*"-the current achievements of the person (Sen 2009). Functionings and capabilities can be both ends and means in themselves. This means that they can be ends that are desirable or they can be instrumental for other means and ends (Foster 2010). For example, being healthy is valued as an end in itself which can also assist achieve other ends and means.

Table 3.1 Two aspects of freedom

Process Aspect	**Opportunity Aspect**
Ability to act on behalf of what matters (**agency**) Institutions, movements, democratic practice as well as each person's agency	Real opportunity to achieve valued functionings, selected from among various good possibilities. (**capability**)

Source: Foster (2010)

3.2.2 Agency

Another construct that is central to the capabilities approach is agency. Agency is an individual's ability to pursue and realise what he or she values and has reason to value, or the freedom to set and pursue one's own goals and interests (Sen 1999). The agency aspect is important in assessing 'what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important' (Sen 1985: 203). This means that individuals with high levels of agency get involved in actions that correlate with what they value or have reason to value (Alkire 2008: 3). Sen (1999) indicates that agency is not only important for intrinsic individual freedom but also for instrumental, for collective action, and for democratic participation. Intrinsic and instrumental individual freedoms are an important part of human life and thus essential for human well-being (Lozano et al. 2012). Well-being may be one goal and interest the individual may have reason to pursue. This implies that the capabilities approach is not only concerned with material resources (essential to achieve goals and interests), but a person's real opportunity in achieving his or her well-being (Sen 1982, 2009). In turn, agency is important for well-being and its absence may lead to ill-being (Nayaran et al. 2000). Collective agency, the ability of the community to act on what they value or have reason to value, is equally important amongst groups when individual ends become the ends of the community (Tiwari 2014). People should then be active agents in development as opposed to being spectators. In this context, an agent is:

> Someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria. (Sen 1999: 19)

As previously stated, capability is closely related to opportunity freedom, whilst agency relates to personal process freedoms. Agency has two elements important to enhance capabilities approach and human development: agency freedom and agency achievement. Agency freedom refers to the freedom an individual has to turn any range of capabilities (potential functionings) into (achieved functionings). Sen describes agency freedom as a person's freedom to bring achievements, values and attempts to produce (Sen 1992: 57). He further describes agency achievement as the realisation of goals one has reason to pursue and which need to be guided by well-being (Sen 1992: 56-57). The notion of agency is more wide ranging than personal well-being. As opposed to utilitarianism that focusses on the state of satisfaction, the capabilities approach foregrounds agency as a measure of individual dis/advantage in and through curriculum (Walker 2006).

Three important claims can be made about agency in education: firstly, it is possible to educate people to reason about personal decisions and preferences; secondly, it is possible to enhance people's capacities to reflect critically on the world and to envisage desirable changes; and thirdly, capacities to accomplish such changes in practice can also be cultivated (Lozano et. al 2012: 2). That is to say, the overall goal of education is to empower people (through the expansion of choices and action to shape one's life) to be in charge of their own lives.

3.2.3 Conversion factors

One of the strengths of the capabilities approach is that it insists on human diversity as normal in life due to personal, social and cultural factors. It draws our attention not only to resources but also to the impact and effects of social arrangements and social relations on individual lives through the concept of conversion factors (Unterhalter and Walker 2007: 10). Conversion factors influence how a person can be or is free to convert available resources (broadly understood) into functionings (Sen 1992). According to Robeyns (2005), conversion factors can be categorised as personal (reading skills, intelligence and physical condition), social (social norms and gender roles) and environmental (climate and geographical location) which play a role in the conversion of resources to individual functioning.

In curriculum we can think about conversion factors at three different levels: i) Personal level comprising conversion factors such as personal biographies and talents; ii) Family level comprising conversion factors such as income; and iii) Institutional level comprising factors such as curriculum which influence how each student is able to mobilise the resources at her disposal. In this context, the education goal would be to provide the curriculum conditions for sociology students' capabilities to be developed, even though how these are exercised would then depend on individual choices and conversion factors (Walker 2012). This contrasts with other goals, for example, the goal to graduate more students or student goals which could be to get a job. Robeyns (2005) illustrates the equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings with an example of a bicycle which can provide a mobility function by taking us to places where we want to go. If a bicycle is given to a person who is disabled and who cannot cycle or if there are no paved roads then it becomes much more difficult or even impossible to use the bicycle to enable the mobility functioning. For this reason, knowing the goods a person owns or can use is not sufficient to know which functionings they can achieve; therefore we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he/she is living. Even though education is more complex, knowing the goods a person owns or can use is not sufficient to know which functionings she can achieve; hence we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he/she is living.

The capabilities approach thus takes into account human diversity in two ways: through its focus on the plurality of functionings and capabilities as the evaluative space and through the explicit focus on personal and socio-environmental factors of converting commodities into functionings. Furthermore, the whole social and institutional context affects the conversion factors and also the capability set directly (Sen 1993, Robeyns 2005). In this regard, sociology students' conversion factors should be examined since they can act as enablers or constraints on students' capabilities, functionings choices and agency. In other words, the focus is on who gets to develop valued capabilities and who is constrained (Walker 2006). These are all key factors to rethink curriculum and pedagogy including, but also beyond, the goal to prepare students for work.

3.3 Relationship between constituent elements of capabilities approach

In the thesis, I argue for a capabilities-inspired approach to the undergraduate sociology curriculum and pedagogical practices that aim at expanding the opportunities and choices of sociology graduates to become and do what they have reason to value. The thesis looks at the

evidence of ‘well-being freedoms’ (which are capabilities), ‘well-being achievements’ (which are functionings) and ‘agency freedoms’ and ‘achievements’ in order to examine whether and the extent to which the sociology curriculum and pedagogical practices offered at universities are socially just for all sociology students. My normative position is that social justice is realised through the formation and expansion of all students’ real opportunities and freedoms to choose, do and become what they have reason to value. Thus, equipping graduates with more capabilities (that they value or have reason to value), more well-being (achievements) and more agency means higher education would be more just rather than less just. If students are equipped with fewer capabilities, less well-being and less agency that means higher education is unjust. Even though the same resources can be availed, conversion factors could enhance or constrain significantly attained functionings. It is also important to note that students can still reach different functionings with the same opportunities and freedom because of choices that they make along the way, and their agency. The matter is not only on which capabilities matter but what the curriculum in doing in fostering these capabilities (Walker 2006: 142). This logic of the relationship is presented in Figure 3.1. The intersection (white/plain intersection) represents the ultimate goal - well-being which ought to be achieved through curriculum and pedagogy:

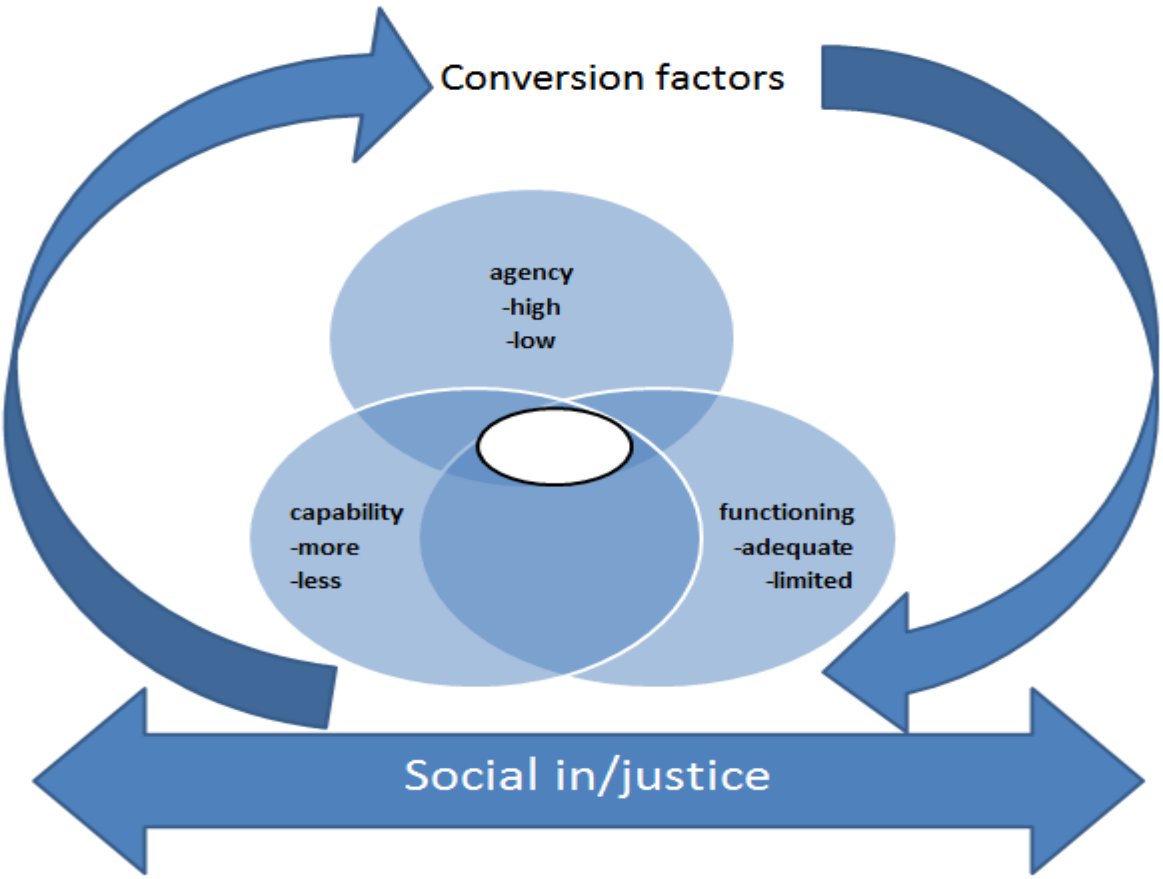


Figure 3.1: Relationship between main capability approach concepts

3.4 What the capabilities approach offers to higher education and curriculum

In this section I highlight what the capabilities approach offers to higher education and curriculum. I also foreground the concept of curriculum as a potential instrument of social justice.

In higher education, the capabilities approach considers each students' functionings, that is, the valued beings and doings and the underlying opportunities or capabilities; a set of real opportunities students have to do and to be what they have reason to value (Sen 1999, 2009). According to Nussbaum (2011), the capabilities approach asks what people are able to do and to be in shaping their lives in higher education. The aforementioned implies that students should have some freedom or opportunities to be able to be and to do what they have reason to value in their lives. Both capability (potential and opportunity) and functioning (being able to exercise valued capabilities) are important in higher education. For example, it would not be enough for students to value a capability for voice but be prevented from exercising their voice in learning contexts through particular educational and social arrangements which value some identities more than others. If we cannot observe the functioning of voice, we

may wish to ask questions both about the underlying capability and teaching and learning conditions (Boni and Walker 2013).

Unlike HCT whose educational efforts are instrumental and are linked to economic development, the capabilities approach emphasises the flourishing of individuals, thus it shifts the unit of analysis from large diverse social units such as race, ethnicity, gender that perpetuate inequality in higher education to individuals. It suggests ways of evaluating higher education at an individual level (Unterhalter et al. 2007). When, for example, we want to analyse class performance in the sociology subject, the capabilities approach allows us to examine not only what a sociology student achieves, for example, passing a sociology course, but also the opportunities and freedoms that were available whilst studying for the course.

The capabilities approach provides rich resources for thinking about social justice in higher education (Unterhalter et al. 2007). Sen's (1980) question, "equality of what?" raises questions about social justice and equality in higher education in terms of, inter alia access, inputs and treatment, requiring us to examine if the curriculum and pedagogy provides for the different needs of diverse students. The capabilities approach also enables us to put focus on equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings. Although Sen is not an education theorist, his notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning are vital in advancing democratic processes in curriculum design and university policy in universities. Sen (1999, 2009) offers insights on how curriculum can be conceptualised. He argues that advancement of justice depends on inclusive democracy that allows public reasoning and discussion that injects different perspectives, and plural voices on educational matters. Walker (2012) pursues the same argument, noting that public deliberation and collective reasoning provide space for continued scrutiny about how university and relevant stakeholders could deliberate about values of the curriculum through debating and discussing issues in public gatherings. Nussbaum (2000: 78) develops the approach further by providing a partial theory of justice through her list of central human capabilities for human dignity (see Table 3.2 for the list) and a life that is worthwhile and fulfilling. Through the list, she specifies the minimum requirements of justice for all societies, including higher education (Nussbaum 2011).

To conclude this discussion, I reiterate that curriculum and pedagogy are at the centre of what students learn in higher education. Conceptually I argue that an approach that designs curriculum and pedagogy based on, for instance, vocational or academic aptitude is limiting

as it treats all students as similar. Accordingly, I suggest that what is required is an approach that understands that curriculum and education ought to foster real opportunities for students to be and do what they have reason to value. With the development of capabilities at the centre, students should be able to achieve flourishing lives. In terms of social justice, the capabilities approach views higher education as an ethical project concerned with the instrumental, intrinsic and social value of education on the one hand and on the other, the transformative potential of equal opportunities through the design of curriculum and pedagogical arrangements to become and be what they value (Walker 2006). My study, therefore, adopts a human development approach operationalised through the capabilities approach in order to understand the social injustices that might be created through curriculum within universities. To achieve this, we need to examine the institutional and social forces that influence the curriculum and consider human diversity in terms of conversion factors. The underlying factor is that if students are not afforded the opportunity to choose, act and achieve what they value, the curriculum may not be doing justice to their educational needs. We can go on to examine whether the students are participating or are included in the design of the curriculum. What is of value here is the extent to which students develop the capabilities required for the functioning they value as a result of the knowledge they acquire. Pedagogically, we may look at the implications of fostering capabilities for every student to achieve the life they value or may have reason to value.

3.5 Capabilities dimensions from literature

From the literature my study identifies capability dimensions that could be cultivated through curriculum and pedagogy. These dimensions show how a capabilities-inspired curriculum could be designed. This study adds to this body of growing literature by analysing sociology scholarship in general and within the South African context in particular. It is important to note that the dimensions only informed or guided the empirical design, while leaving spaces for emerging themes and dimensions through student and lecturer voices. To begin with, most dimensions have been derived from Nussbaum's list of central capabilities.

Following Aristotelian traditions, Nussbaum (2002: 290) suggests an education that develops each individual's capacity to be fully human. The capabilities list could act as a benchmark for higher education and could guide curriculum construction. The list of 10 central capabilities recognises that students ought to value friendship, have respect for others, experience emotions towards others and reason about their own good lives (Nussbaum 2000).

As previously stated in Chapter 2, Nussbaum (2000: 78-80) specifically identified four relevant capabilities for higher education curriculum and pedagogy: practical reasoning (the capacity for critical examination of one's self and ones traditions), affiliation (to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interactions), senses imagination and thought (enables people to think of what it looks like in someone's shoes) and emotions (being able to have attachments to things and persons outside of ourselves).

The idea of developing capabilities lists raises debates on whether or not they should be developed as an effort to achieve a minimum threshold in different fields. Nussbaum's list of 10 central capabilities has been criticised by several scholars. The contestations include the fact that the list is too prescriptive, undemocratic, and fails to recognise cultural differences (Robeyns 2005, Feldman and Gellert 2005). Some argue that it is limited and biased towards political frameworks and legal constitutions (Clard 2005). The most cited critique is raised by Sen (2004) who insists that the task of weighing different capabilities should be left to the ethical and political considerations of each society based on public reasoning and deliberation. While he does not specify which capabilities are more important than others, Sen (2009) notes that a list based only on theory is problematic as it might fail to recognise the different socio-cultural context and denies the chance of public reasoning. Alkire (2005) also argues that Nussbaum's methodology runs counter to an essential thrust of the capabilities approach which has been the attempt to redirect development theory away from a reductive focus on a minimally decent life towards a more holistic account of human well-being for all people. Nussbaum (2000, 2003, and 2004) however, argues that her list is revisable though it remains unclear how this can be done (Walker 2006).

As previously stated, Sen's (1999, 2009) notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning is vital in advancing democratic processes and university policy in universities. It offers insights on how curriculum can be conceptualised. He argues that advancement of justice depends on inclusive democracy that allows public reasoning and discussion that injects different perspectives and a plurality of voices on educational matters (Sen 2009). In such a scenario, individuals are regarded as agents who voice and act on things that they may value. However, Sen's notion of public reasoning has been criticised for not giving greater specification on the practicality of carrying out such an exercise and the necessary conditions required. Other scholars think that Sen's advocacy of deliberative democracy is necessary but

not enough for a full theory of justice (Corbridge 2002, Feldman and Gellert 2006). Despite these arguments, the notion of public deliberation and collective reasoning creates space for academics, students, and relevant stakeholders to examine the curriculum values and provides a platform to inform the future on democratic construction of curriculum.

Walker (2012) proposes a curriculum framework that could be applied to university education and specifically to guide and evaluate curriculum and pedagogy for capabilities formation in higher education. She suggests that knowledge selection for capabilities formation must be determined contextually as well as ethically and must be subject dependent. For such a curriculum, the main dimensions for human development will form part of the curriculum construction. According to the framework, the indicative capabilities to be created through curriculum might include: practical reasoning, critical thinking and reasoned analysis, respect, imagination and empathy, cosmopolitan citizenship and ethical awareness (Walker 2012). These opportunities would be made available through appropriate pedagogical arrangements to foster participation, reflexivity, inter-culturalism and so forth, and with functioning outcomes such as acting as a critical agent in one's own life, having multiple perspectives on the world, being open-minded, decent, humble, curious and tolerant towards others and being able to lead a dignified life with a fair chance of choosing among preferred alternatives.

For pedagogical guidance and practices in higher education, Walker draws up a list of eight human capabilities as a framework for evaluating higher education pedagogy and student learning within the context of the social and pedagogical arrangements which influence the possibilities for equality in learning opportunity (Walker 2006). The capabilities on her list are: practical reason, educational resilience, knowledge and imagination, learning disposition, social relations and social networks, emotional integrity, bodily integrity respect and dignity, and recognition (Walker 2006: 128-129). Applying the capabilities approach to gender; Walker (2007) puts forward a provisional list of educational capabilities with a special focus on gender equality drawing on empirical data from a South African study. The capabilities include: autonomy; knowledge; social relations; respect and recognition; aspiration; voice; bodily integrity and bodily health; and emotional integrity and emotions (Walker 2007). Calitz (2016) investigated how pedagogical and institutional arrangements enable or constrain first-generation students to convert available resources into the capability for equal participation. She proposes a list of six capabilities as a pedagogical response to encourage

students' equal participation and these are i) Practical reason; ii) Critical literacies; iii) Student research; iv) Deliberative participation; v) Critical affiliation and; vi) Values for the public good (Table 3.2). In the schooling context, Terzi (2007) argues that capability to be educated is a fundamental entitlement. She proposes seven basic capabilities for education functioning: i) Literacy, ii) Numeracy, iii) Sociality and participation, iv) Learning dispositions, v) Physical activities, vi) Science and technology and vii) Practical reasoning (Terzi 2007). She argues that these capabilities are required to ensure the achievement of educational functionings or outcomes. Terzi's list has been criticised in that it is unclear whether the list has been generated through democratic processes or not (Hart 2012).

The debate on lists is ongoing and the study concurs that the generation of lists must not be prescriptive and rigid but it must leave room to add capabilities sensitive to context and culture. I further concur with proponents of lists that lists initiate a dialogue and discussion on ways to evaluate and understand capabilities in curriculum and pedagogy in higher education although there is a need to contextualise the application.

Table: 3.2 Capabilities list

	Nussbaum (2000)	Walker (2006)	Walker (2012)	Calitz (2016)
1	Life			
2	Bodily health		Values of the public good	
3	Bodily integrity	Bodily integrity.		
4	Sense, Imagination, and Thought,	Knowledge and imagination	Imagination empathy (including emotions)	
5	Emotions,	Emotional integrity, emotions/ Social relations and social networks		
6	Practical Reason,	Practical reason/learning dispositions/ Educational resilience	Practical reasoning/'Thick' critical thinking and reasoned analysis	Practical Reason: Student research; Critical literacies
7	Affiliation	Respect, dignity and recognition	Empathy/ Respect/Right relationships/Global citizenship	Critical affiliation
8	Other species,		Ethical awareness	
9	Play,			
10	Control over one´s political and material Environment			Deliberate participation

Sources: Calitz (2016), Nussbaum (2000), Walker (2006, 2012)

3.6 Towards a capabilities-inspired curriculum

This chapter has presented an argument for a capabilities-based approach to the undergraduate sociology curriculum and pedagogical practices that aim at expanding the opportunities and choices of sociology graduates to become and do what they have reason to value. In this section I outline the literature on how curriculum can be shaped to achieve valued capabilities and functionings.

As outlined in Chapter 1, the discipline of sociology has been used as a case study to think about how curriculum and pedagogy informed by capabilities approach constructs. The study further asks what sociology students have reason to value doing and being, how this could be structured in the curriculum and how the curriculum could be transmitted to achieve the desired outcomes (functionings). To answer these questions the study advances an expansive undergraduate sociology curriculum. There are three parts that are important in examining the design of curriculum and pedagogy: i) Indicative capabilities (the idea is to deliver curricula knowledge to develop capabilities); ii) Functionings (beings and doings that students value or have reason to value which contribute to students' functionings to live enriching and productive lives); and iii) Pedagogy (curriculum in action).

Based on human development dimensions and Nussbaum's (1999, 2000) and Sen's (2009) guidance on education, Walker (2006, 2012), suggests a framework which shows how educational objectives, indicative capabilities, pedagogies and functionings could look based on human development values (see Table 3.3 below for details). She suggests a framework grounded in human development aims which are constant and which all need to be considered. She suggests indicative capabilities, meaning that other capabilities could be considered provided they align with the human development paradigm and are multi-dimensional (Ibid). The selection of curriculum knowledge, which requires expert knowledge, should be done at the empirical level. This indicates that the selection may differ in different contexts, hence the need to leave it open. For transmission of knowledge, human development inflected pedagogies are suggested. In teaching and pedagogy, for example, participatory methods such as discussion and dialogue allow knowledge to be transmitted for capabilities development (Walker 2010). The end result is that the achieved functionings must be a reflection of curriculum aims, indicative capabilities and pedagogy.

Although general frameworks have been presented, they were not adopted for use in this study. However, the framework allowed me to interrogate and discuss the design of sociology undergraduate curriculum. As with capabilities dimensions discussed earlier, the framework did not determine the results of my research as final dimensions were derived from students and lecturers' voices and theory. This was done to allow the data to lead in identification of valued capabilities in the case studies, rather than having the researcher predetermine in that regard.

Table 3.3: Curriculum, human development and capabilities

Human development dimensions (Curriculum aims)	Indicative capabilities to be created through curriculum	Curriculum & knowledge selection principles	Curriculum in action-Pedagogy	Functionings
Empowerment and participation	Practical reason	This would be determined contextually subject by subject for higher	Socratic methods	Acting as critical agent in one's own life
Equity	'Thick' critical thinking and reasoned analysis	Knowledge and intellectual development but	Participatory methods - and dialogue	Capacity to live a decent life with a fair chance of choosing among preferred alternatives
Sustainability	'Right' relationships	could include general ideas like attention to quality of life, ethics, global processes and human interconnectedness,	Reflexive practices	Disciplined and independent thinker, having multiple perspectives on world, open minded Aware of moral and ethical debates and questions
Belonging	Respect	Inequalities, environment & interdisciplinary, real problems and issues of the local context, and	Inclusive and intercultural methods, collaborative work across Culture of respect for all, safe environment	Confident Courage to decide what one stands for what one is accountable Responsible other – regarding agents-obligations to others/ contribute to justice in society
Human security	Imagination , empathy, Global citizenship Ethical awareness	required study of both science and arts subjects	Critical scrutiny of inequalities Social engagement in development activities Participatory action research New technologies for learning	Respect for all the natural environment and for life Recognise full human dignity of all Decent humble, tolerant to others Respectful of the right to be different

Source: Walker (2012: 458).

Walker (2012) argues that a capabilities-inspired curriculum would be instrumentally, intrinsically, and socially valuable. However, curriculum design is a process that could be affected by other internal or even external factors such as power dynamics within structures of universities, faculties and departments, institutional policy. As a result, it is not straight-forward.

3.7 Conclusion

In this Chapter I have drawn attention to the theoretical underpinnings of the study and I also highlighted how curriculum can be used as a vehicle to achieve social justice in higher education. The chapter explained and justified the nuanced nature of the capabilities approach to other developmental approaches in terms of how it focusses on people's freedom rather than their incomes (which is one of the many facets of capabilities approach). As I have highlighted, I believe the capabilities approach has more to offer to higher education curricula development because it considers expansion of capabilities (freedoms), agency (individual and collective), conversion factors and, skills and abilities for work which are equally important, especially in South Africa. The capabilities approach also brings in another dimension – human development among others. From this point of view, it is clear that the capabilities approach is multi-dimensional thus sensitive to the intercultural and inter-personal variations and the distribution of opportunities within different groups. The available literature on curriculum dimensions shows us that we can design and understand curriculum and pedagogy for a purpose. Selection of curriculum knowledge can be done to achieve valued functionings while the knowledge is purposefully transmitted to achieve desired functionings. Additionally, the capabilities approach could make important contributions to the process of defining curricula content. For example the participation of students, lecturers and all relevant stakeholders in society could help in democratically identifying on what needs to be included. At the end, if students acquire more capabilities, more agency, valued functionings, and more well-being that could mean that higher education is more just rather than less just. In the next Chapter I turn to the methodology used to conduct the research.

Chapter 4: Research design, methodology and data analysis

> "If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk to them?" (Kvale 1996:2)

4.1 Introduction

Research is always grounded in explicit or implicit philosophical assumptions which inform the approach and the methods that are appropriate for the development of knowledge in a given context (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). In conducting and evaluating research, it is important to define valid assumptions about knowledge, reality and values in advance. Paradigms offer different ways in which we understand social reality and the nature of knowledge. This chapter introduces the reader to the stages and processes involved in the study, the methodology and the philosophical assumptions underpinning the research. The chapter describes the methods used in data collection and analysis whilst evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each technique. It also provides justification for the use of a case study methodology. Following that, the sampling method, ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also presented. Each section includes a brief introduction followed by explanations of key concepts. The chapter offers definitions, justifications and assumptions underlying the concepts and principles adopted. To set the scene, I will restate my research questions which are based on the literature review and concepts underpinning the capabilities approach such as capabilities, functionings, freedom, well-being, conversion factors and agency.

4.2 Research Questions

The study set out to answer these questions:

i) What understandings of sociology as an academic discipline inform the development of curriculum and its operationalisation in the teaching of sociology at undergraduate level in the case study university department? What student functionings are valued by sociology lecturers in constructing a curriculum?

ii) To what extent are curriculum intentions aligned with pedagogical approaches?

iii) In what ways does curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contribute to enhance or constrain their capabilities to live and act in the world? What functionings (and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree?

iv) In which way can a capabilities approach lens contribute to the theoretical and practical development of the sociology curriculum for undergraduates?

4.3 Towards an interpretative research paradigm

An interpretivist approach was adopted for this study. An interpretivist paradigm is grounded on the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed, multi-perspectival, and fluid (Lincoln 1990). This then informs what counts as legitimate knowledge and legitimate ways of acquiring knowledge through research. From this perspective, truth cannot be grounded in one objective reality as reality is derived from human interactions aimed at making meaning. What is taken to be valid or true is negotiated within social settings, cultures, and relationships with other people (Greene 2010). This approach ascertains that human social action is meaningful and in research, the enquirer has to grasp the meaning that constitutes action (Fay 1996). Reeves and Hedberg (2003) indicate that the interpretivist paradigm stresses the need to put analysis in context and is concerned with understanding the world as it is from the subjective experiences of individuals. Findings or knowledge claims are produced as the investigation unfolds; this implies that findings emerge through dialogue in which conflicting interpretations are negotiated among members of a community. Common tenets of an interpretative approach include the fostering of dialogue between researchers and respondents (dialectical process), and interpretations based on a particular context or situation and time. They are open to re-interpretation and negotiation through conversation so that knowledge is always situated, partial and also trustworthy.

A critique of this kind of knowledge is that truthfulness is contested, complicated and subjective. Truth can be dependent on perspectives and preconceptions of individuals towards a phenomenon (Griffiths 2009). For example, two individuals may report on the same thing absolutely truthfully, and yet, owing to their differing perspectives and preconceptions, their accounts may not be the same. Thus Griffiths (2009) highlights the need for a researcher to make judgements of truthfulness because it is not obvious that participants speak unquestionable truths. In this regard, Griffiths suggested a criterion for ‘trustworthy knowledge’ highlighting that researchers make their judgements public and explain how judgement was reached. Thus, a researcher needs to present the audience with evidence of how stories were produced, with what intended audience, and for what purpose.

According to Burrell and Morgan (1979), interpretivism is not a single paradigm; it is rather a family of diverse paradigms. The philosophical base of interpretive research is hermeneutics and phenomenology (Boland 1985). As a philosophical approach to human understanding, hermeneutics provides the philosophical grounding for interpretivism. As a mode of analysis,

it suggests a way of understanding meaning or trying to make sense of textual data which may be unclear. The most fundamental principle of hermeneutics is that all human understanding is achieved by iterations between considering the interdependent meaning of parts, and the whole that they form. Although my study is not primarily phenomenological, some of its aspects are underpinned by the principles of this interpretivist approach with its focus on discovering and expressing the essential characteristics of a certain phenomenon as they really are, for example, a curriculum. Phenomenology is the study of phenomena, appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience (Mohanty 2008). The approach uses meaning (as opposed to measurement) oriented methodologies which are typically qualitative methods, such as interviewing, participant observation or data analysis reliant on the relationship between the researcher and subjects (Guba and Lincoln 2005). Practically, this can be achieved through being reflective and inquisitive. The advantage of this method is that a dialogue is created between the researchers and those with whom they interact with in order to collaboratively construct a meaningful reality. In addition, interpretive methodologies do not predefine dependent and independent variables but focus on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan and Maxwell 1994). Generally, meanings are emergent from the research process.

The interpretivist approach was adopted for this study because of its compatibility with my research argument. To say that sociology curriculum is meaningful implies that it has certain content that indicates the kind of curriculum it is or is intended. Interpretive approaches provide the opportunity to address issues of impact, and to question 'why' and 'how' curricula in higher education are informed and developed (Deetz 1996). The approach also gives room to find meaning in a sociology curriculum for undergraduates and that required me to interpret and make meaning of the curriculum documents and the participants' responses. The questions underpinning this study required me to understand how knowledge was acquired by sociology undergraduate students through the curriculum and whether this enhances or constrains students' functionings. By interpreting people's words, actions and associated documents, the paradigm enabled me to make meaning and draw conclusions about the sociology curriculum and its operationalisation. Principles of critical research[24]

[24] This entails questioning the conceptual and theoretical bases of knowledge and methods and asking questions that go beyond prevailing assumptions and understandings. It challenges us to consider alternative ways of knowing, being and acting.

have been incorporated into the interpretative paradigm. This allowed me to expound the attributes of sociology graduates in terms of being critical (not accepting things at face value) of the social matters in society which may include ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability among other issues. It further adds to the explicit dimension and concern for social justice in and through social science education.

4.4 Qualitative research methodology

Methodology is entwined with or is an aspect of a paradigm, as mentioned above. According to Gale (1998), methodology is defined as a conceptual framework which specifies how research is approached and guided. Gough (2000) describes methodology as the rationale behind the selection of specific ways of conducting research and the assumptions that guide the research in relation to the kind of knowledge or understanding the researcher is seeking. The aim of the study is also an important determinant of the methodology that adequately answers research questions. In this case, the study questions the extent to which knowledge, acquired by sociology undergraduate students through curriculum, enhances their capabilities to live and act in the world. The study is concerned with processes as well as outcomes; the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of sociology curricula in terms of enhancement of students' capabilities. To answer such questions, a qualitative methodology was selected.

According to Draper (2004), quantitative methodology refers to the tradition of research dominant in science since the seventeenth century, which emphasises the measurement and quantification of phenomena as essential steps in the process of enquiry. Quantitative research is located in a materialist and positivist paradigm and concentrates on understanding and describing the world in terms of observable physical phenomena. It focusses on quantitative measurement of the phenomena under investigation (Draper 2004). Quantitative studies broadly look at many cases, people, or units measured in the form of aggregate numbers (Neuman 2009). The approach is concerned with objective empirical 'hard data' which is directly observable and measurable. It is more concerned with the measurement and analysis of casual relationships or correlations between variables and not processes (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). In that regard, research is carried within a 'value-free' framework (Draper 2004). In short, quantitative methods are more concerned with hypothesis testing in order to establish universal laws of cause and effect and, on the basis of these laws, predict future outcomes (Draper 2004). In view of my research's orientation and agenda, a quantitative methodology was inadequate.

On the other hand, qualitative research stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, and the intimate relationship between the researcher, what is studied and the situational constraints shaping the inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Kvale (1996) defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the subjects' perspective, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. Qualitative research is concerned with the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals. Thus, it tends to start with 'what', 'how' and 'why' type of questions rather than 'how much' or 'how many'. It is also concerned with examining these questions in the context of everyday life and each individual's meanings and explanations. Qualitative research can thus be broadly described as interpretative and naturalistic in that it seeks to understand and explain beliefs and behaviours within the context that they occur (Kvale 1996).

Given the above descriptions and considerations, my study used qualitative research for the following reasons. Firstly, because my study focusses on human learning, the best methodology to study human learning and discover nuanced behaviour is through qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Secondly, perspectives are best captured by interviews and observations of various kinds yielding textual data which can be interpreted to make sense of how the curriculum was developed in case studies. Thirdly, qualitative methodologies enabled me to examine enhancements or constraints of the curriculum in the everyday lives of students. This allowed me as the researcher, to interpret the undergraduate sociology curriculum on a case based position, thus directing my attention to the specifics of the sociology department under study (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Fourthly, qualitative research assumes that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable. To make sense of data collected, I related it to the nature of the reality at universities and faculties that house sociology departments. Lastly, unlike quantitative research, qualitative approaches are flexible and can use open ended research questions to allow greater naturalness and interaction between researcher and study participants.

4.4.1 Research methods

According to Gough (2000), a research method is the practical technique of collecting data. Research methods elucidate how data collection is to be conducted and this includes sampling of participants, tests, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and observations to be carried out in an attempt to answer the study question(s). Some studies, for example, cross-

sectional ones, provide a snapshot of a single fixed time point which allows researchers to analyse it in detail whilst other studies, such as the longitudinal, provide a moving picture that enables researchers follow events, people, or social relations over time. Cross-sectional research examines a single point in time or takes a one-time snapshot approach. Cross-sectional research is usually the simplest and least costly alternative, but its main weakness is its' inability to capture social processes or change. Longitudinal research examines features of people or other units at more than one time. It is usually more complex and costly than cross-sectional research, and it is also more effective and informative. Longitudinal research comprises time series, panel, and cohort studies. In a time-series study a researcher gathers the same type of information from different people at multiple times while the researcher observes the exact same people at two or more times in a panel survey. A cohort study collects information from people with a shared experience two or more times. Given the time constraints of the PhD and my desire for depth rather than breadth, I opted for a snapshot approach.

One of the qualitative methodologies is the interview. There are three types of qualitative interviews including the standardised (structured), unstandardised (informal or non-directive) and the semi-standardised (guided semi-structured or focussed) interviews (Babbie 1995, Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 1996, Denzin and Lincoln 2005). Standardised interviews are designed to collect information using a set of pre-determined questions that are expected to elicit the subjects' thoughts, opinions, and attitudes concerning the study. In standardised interviews all respondents are asked the same set of questions, in the same order by interviewers trained to treat every interview situation similarly. Their disadvantage is that they are rigid and are based on the assumption that all the questions are worded in a manner that all participants clearly comprehend (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). This 'one size fits all' approach does not take into consideration participants' differences and fails to offer room for adjustments (Converse and Schuman 1974).

I used semi-structured interviews with my study participants. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative method of inquiry that combines a pre-determined set of open questions and at the same time allowing room for new ideas and themes to be discussed and elaborated on by both the interviewer and interviewee. In this study, I shared the sentiments of Borg and Gall (1989) who consider the semi-structured interview as often superior to other data gathering methods because it allows interviewers to probe and obtain adequate answers (Borgand and

Gall 1989). As Wellington (2000) suggests, semi-structured interviews allowed me, as the researcher, to investigate things that I did not observe. These interviews were suitable for my study because they gave room to obtain nuanced descriptions through open-ended questions. The interview guide allowed me to carefully decide on how to use the limited time availed by participants, to sequence questions in logical order, and to re-arrange them when necessary. I was able to interview individuals in a systematic and comprehensive way by delimiting in advance curriculum issues to be explored. The approach also gave me the chance to explain and clarify misunderstandings that arose from the research questions and the study (Wellington 2000). I had access not only to what people said, but how they said it as well as observe the non-verbal behaviour that cannot be captured by other research instruments.

4.4.2 The iterative nature of developing research questions

The iterative nature of formulating research questions involved reviewing available literature. This highlighted what was well covered and the existing gaps that required exploration. The relevant curriculum and capabilities literature include work by McLean et al. (2012, 2013), Nussbaum (2000, 2010), Walker (2006, 2010, 2012, 2015), Sen (2009), and other academics writing on the capabilities approach (see Section 2.6). Although I had selected specific questions for leading sociology academics, during the data collection process I discovered that the responses did not adequately address the overall purpose of the research. Consequently, data from leading sociology academics was not used in the study. While interviewing both students and lecturers I uncovered insightful questions, particularly on graduate attributes such as critical thinking and teaching arrangements. Thus, the iterative nature of developing research questions in a qualitative study design permitted me to refine my research questions in the light of new insights (Morse 1994). These questions allowed me to further pursue the responses and thus gained deeper understanding on issues of curricula from the context of participants (Kvale 1996).This facilitated a better understanding of the research problem. While refining and redefining my questionnaires, I ensured consistency and a clear relationship with the problem and overall purpose of the research. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, document analysis was conducted. According to Thomas (2011), gathering data from documents requires the researcher to locate the relevant official papers, read and analyse them.

4.5 Case selection and procedures

A case study method has been chosen in this study for reasons which will be explained in the second part of this section. Thomas (2011) points out that case study research concentrates on

one particular area of research and does not aim to generalise. The main purpose of the case study is to portray, analyse, and interpret the uniqueness of real cases and situations through accessible accounts (Cohen et al. 2007). A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle (Nisbet and Watt 1984: 72). It is the study of an instance in action (Adelman et al.1980). Simons (2009: 21) indicates that a case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institutional programme or system in real life situations. Drawing from a number of definitions, common characteristics of a case study include the following:

i) It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case,

ii) It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case,

iii) It blends a description of events with their analysis, and

iv) It is focussed on individual actors or groups of actors and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.

Neuman (2009) states that the researcher carefully selects a few key cases (these could be particular students, for example, out of the bigger population interviewed) to illustrate an issue and study it (or them) in detail while considering the specific context of each case. In case-study research, a researcher examines, in depth, many features of a few cases over a duration of time with very detailed, varied, and extensive data, often in a qualitative form. The primary purpose of a case study is to generate an in-depth understanding of a specific topic (Simons 2009). The case study was chosen in light of the depth that I sought to attain in my enquiry.

Stake (1995: 3-4) identifies three main types of case study: i) Intrinsic case studies (studies that are undertaken in order to understand the particular case in question); ii) Instrumental case studies (examining a particular case in order to gain insight into an issue or a theory); and iii) Collective case studies (groups of individual studies that are undertaken to gain a fuller picture). Since I focussed on examining how knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contributed or constrained the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world, the study adopted an instrumental case study approach. An Instrumental case study allowed me to understand how the sociology curriculum was developed, with a view to examine how curriculum in higher education offered or might have offered students real opportunities and expanded individuals' choices to do what they value doing and being.

4.5.1 Access

There are 26 public universities[25] in South Africa and I intentionally decided to select two institutions in order to attain more depth and, subsequently more thickness/richness. The focus was on understanding the specifics rather than generalities. The case studies selection was based on accessibility and proximity. Although other factors were considered in selection, these were overtaken by issues of accessibility. These factors included:

i) University mission statements,

ii) Faculty or Sociology Department mission/purpose,

iii) Sociology curriculum of undergraduates focussing on core modules and electives, and

iv) Institutional curriculum, geographical location and cultural background.

Initially, three emails were sent requesting a meeting with the respective Heads of the Sociology Departments (HoDs). Two HoDs responded positively and further communication with them led to meetings at their respective locations in March and April 2015 after I had provided both HoDs with my proposal. Case study one was given the pseudonym "Equality University" (EU) and case study two was "Inclusive University" (IU). During the initial meetings, I explained the aims, objectives, importance and processes involved in the study. Additional emphasis was placed on the fact that the research was purely for my PhD thesis and not an evaluation of the departments for another purpose. However, critical scrutiny of the research judgements or outcome could not be guaranteed. Prior to these meetings with the HoDs, the two departments' staff members met to discuss my intended study and IU lecturers raised concerns about anonymity and confidentiality which I addressed adequately. This was important to prevent any over or under-reporting of evidence in order to save the departments reputation. Thereafter, access was granted by the Faculty of Humanities (FoH) ethics committee at IU.

Despite my efforts to gain access, EU responded outlining some concerns that led me to question the sociology department's sincerity about participating in my study. They questioned why I chose their department out of all the others and the reasons for not being consulted in developing the proposal. They also questioned my suitability to conduct such a study given that I do not holder an advanced qualification in sociology. Questions were also raised concerning the maintenance of anonymity throughout the study. The lecturers also emphasised that they were not concerned with the outcome of the research and stated that

[25] Public higher education providers were selected because of uniformity in terms of government funding and regulation through the Department of Higher Education and Training.

they would not be obliged to act on the recommendations of the study (which as I had explained, they were not expected to do). In response to these concerns, I explained that I had purposefully excluded potential study participants in the development of my research proposal due to concerns about the possibility of bias (lack of objectivity when the researched is part of the research team). I again stressed that the research was purely for my PhD studies and was not aiming to put the Sociology Department under scrutiny. The confidentiality and anonymity of the universities was preserved. Although South African university social contexts are not identical, I deliberately excluded descriptions of them because that would easily lead to the identification of the case studies. For example, people could easily identify a university if I were to state the year it was established, the location or whether it was a historically black or white university.

In addition, I explained that although I do not hold an advanced qualification in sociology, the post graduate qualification I possess equips me with the necessary analytical skills to systemically think and apply contemporary methodologies to the complexities in higher education research. My assumption that building rapport would increase comfort among participants seems to have had little impact at EU. I strongly feel that the staff meeting they held before I met their HoD influenced how the lecturers viewed my presence in the department and their responses in the interviews. I assume that they considered the study as a 'witch hunting' exercise to expose bad teaching. Despite these challenges, further engagement led to permission being granted and ethical approval was sought thereafter.

4.6 Research participants and data collection tool

To answer my research questions, data was collected from two research groups: sociology honours students and lecturers. The honours students were chosen because they had graduated with a bachelor's degree majoring in sociology at one of the case study universities in the previous year. This means that students who had graduated in 2014 at either EU or IU majoring in sociology were eligible for the study. These students were required to reflect on their past learning experience on how curriculum was designed and implemented. Attention was given to the design process and student involvement, as well as what they valued being or becoming.

The second group comprised sociology lecturers. Lecturers/or senior academic staff who teach and have expertise in sociology and curriculum issues or are involved in the design of the sociology curriculum at the university were recruited. The lecturers were asked, among

other things, to describe how the curriculum had been developed, the kind of graduate they aimed to educate and the extent to which the curriculum aims were aligned with the teaching process. Information about university and even departmental approaches to participation, freedom to choose subjects and course content issues was also collected.

Data was collected between April and October 2015. EU lecturers were interviewed in April and May while students were interviewed in June and July. IU lecturers were interviewed in August and students in September and October. In both cases, participants were individually interviewed at different venues agreed upon by the researcher and the participants. In most cases, lecturers at both EU and IU were interviewed in their own offices while students' interview venues ranged from building terraces, sports grounds, student rooms and restaurants. On average, each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Field notes were taken during the interviews and were converted to detailed transcripts immediately after each interview. Table 4.1 shows the number of interviews conducted with each group and the instrument used to collect data.

Table 4.1 Research design

	Participants	Research tool	No. of participants	Location
Phase 1	Document analysis	NA	NA	National level: DHET docs University level: Strategic frameworks, Mission statements etc.
Phase 2	Sociology honours students	Semi-structured interview guide	6	EU
	Sociology honours students	Semi-structured interview guide	5	IU
Phase 3	Sociology lecturers	Semi-structured interview guide	5	EU
	Sociology lecturers	Semi-structured interview guide	6	IU

4.7 Sampling method

Sampling is the process of selecting representative units from a large population. The sampling procedure might significantly impact on the type of research questions that can be answered from the data, the level of generalisation that can be drawn and what the data can be used for, for example, for policy application (Patton 1996). The question that could be asked in this regard is: How do we select the elements to become part of the sample? Two general forms of sampling exist, that is, probability and non-probability sampling. The major difference between the two is that the latter does not involve random selection while the former does. This distinction directly impacts the extent to which results may be generalisable to the population and the confidence with which one can make research-based claims. Probability sampling is used in quantitative studies and ensures that that each element in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Random sampling also ensures that researcher's interviewing methods do not bias the sample. Types of random sampling include

simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling, cluster sampling and these will not be discussed since the proposed research will employ a qualitative research approach.

A sample based on non-probability sampling likely has elements that are non-randomly selected. This means that each unit does not have an equal probability of being selected. It is mostly associated with qualitative research, particularly where special contexts and anomalous cases are the desired research focus. There are mainly four types of non-probability sampling: convenience, snowballing, quota sampling, and purposive sampling. Convenience sampling is when the sample is drawn from available subjects. This unstructured approach is not relied upon for results representative of the population (often considered the least rigorous) (Patton 1996). The disadvantage of convenience sampling is that not everyone in the target population has an equal chance of inclusion as the sample will depend critically on who was first sampled and their particular social network. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method which can be used to collect data on a difficult to identify target population. This method also involves the researcher identifying a few participants through accidental sampling or by asking the first few participants to identify more participants who meet the criteria of the research and might be willing to partake in the study (Sarantakos 2005). In quota sampling, the researcher stratifies the sample and assigns weights according to the proportional representation in the population. A complex matrix of attributes is compiled, so that it is possible to identify elements with a specific set of attributes. Thereafter elements with desired attributes (as determined by research question) are selected into the sample according to the quota the researcher assigns. The above mentioned types of sampling do not dwell on in-depth cases under study and are not the best for cases studies. As indicated earlier, a case study dwells on the specifics rather than generalities (Simons 2009). This type of sampling was therefore, not deemed as suitable for this study.

In purposive sampling, participants are intentionally or purposefully selected because they have certain characteristics related to the purpose of the research (Patton 1996). An outstanding characteristic of purposive sampling is that it allows the researcher to pick a group or individuals for a specific purpose (Cohen et al. 2007). It is not haphazard and leads to the selection of information-rich cases which can illustrate what is typical to a particular setting. Thus, purposive sampling suited the purpose of the study which centres on availing an in-depth understanding curriculum issues.

4.8 Lecturer sampling

As noted earlier, I planned to recruit sociology lecturers/or senior academic staff who taught and had expertise in sociology and curriculum issues or were involved in the development of sociology curriculum at each university. Purposive sampling was therefore appropriate because it permitted me to select those with in-depth knowledge about the sociology curriculum by virtue of their role as sociology lecturers (curriculum and pedagogy). Lecturers' consideration at both EU and IU involved identifying module coordinators with the assistance of the HoDs but the final decision of those interviewed rested with me. For example, 10 lecturers were eligible at EU but I selected five based on the number of years teaching undergraduate students, level of qualification and where the qualification was obtained. Sample size depended on whether the information that was collected adequately addressed the purpose of the study or reached saturation point[26]. To give a picture of how this worked out, the next sections presents the FoH headcount, qualification level and the number of permanent and temporary instructional or research staff at EU (Table 4.2). Thereafter, I present EU staff head count for the Sociology Department. Table 4.3 also presents qualification level, rank of staff and the number of permanent and temporary instructional or research staff in the department. Table 4.4 provides the lecturer profiles according to gender, race, module coordinated, nationality, qualification level and number of years teaching. All this information provides an overview of how equipped the FoH and particularly the Department of Sociology (DoS) are in terms of instructional staff, which might have a bearing on how they designed curriculum and organise teaching.

4.8.1 Equality university FoH staff headcount

The FoH had a total of 411 instructional research staff (Table 4.2 below). Of these 226 were full time workers while 185 were temporary workers. The faculty had 13 full time associate professors and one was employed on a temporary basis. Not all academic staff had PhD at the time of the research.

[26] Saturation point is when the researcher cannot find new data from research sources.

Table 4.2: EU FoH staff headcount in 2014

Support Total	Qualification level	Rank of staff member	Permanent	Temporary	2014 Total
Instructional /research	Doctoral degree	Associate professor	12	1	13
		Below junior lecturer	2	23	25
		Lecturer	26	3	29
		Professor	21	16	37
		Senior lecturer	38	7	45
	Master's degree	Associate professor	1	-	1
		Below junior lecturer	2	24	26
		Junior lecturer	22	7	29
		Lecturer	67	7	74
		Professor	-	1	1
		Senior lecturer	4	2	6
	PG less Master's degree	Below junior lecturer	2	41	43
		Junior lecturer	21	14	35
		Lecturer	1	5	6
		Senior lecturer	1	1	2
	Undergraduate degree	Below junior lecturer	1	29	30
		Junior lecturer	4	1	5
		Lecturer	1	2	3
		Senior lecturer		1	1
Instructional /research Total			**226**	**185**	**411**

4.8.2 EU Sociology Department and lecturers' background

The Sociology Department had 12 permanent instructional staff. Of these, 5 were PhD holders and the rest were junior staff with a master's qualification or less. The department had one full time professor whilst the other was engaged on a temporary basis. The department had 29 members as shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: EU Staff headcount Sociology Department in 2014

Instructional staff	Qualification level	Rank of staff member	Permanent	Temporary	Total
DoS	Doctoral	Lecturer	2	-	2
		Professor	1	1	2
		Senior lecturer	2	-	2
	Master	Below junior level	-	2	2
		Junior lecturer	2	-	2
		Lecturer	4		4
	PG less Master's degree	Below junior lecturer	-	11	11
		Lecturer	1		1
	Undergraduate	Below junior lecturer	-	3	3
Instruction / Research Total			**12**	**17**	**29**

EU data was drawn from the interviews conducted with five sociology lecturers (see Appendix 4 for lecturer interview schedule). Four lecturers were recruited because they were course coordinators in charge of designing course modules and revising or updating them. The participant's biographic details were captured. To protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used in the study (see Table 4.4). Noma and Vaal had PhDs whilst Will had a master's degree. Lizzy and Rose had honours degrees and were both pursuing their master's degrees. Four participants obtained their qualifications at EU and Lizzy had undertaken her post graduate studies overseas. Rose was the only participant who had not attained any of her qualifications at EU. Overall, the qualification levels of teaching staff were relatively low, implying there were fewer lecturers with PhDs.

Table 4.4: EU lecturer profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Module Coordinated	Nationality	Highest Educational Qualification	Where obtained	Number of years lecturing
Noma	F	White Afrikaans	Population and Environment	Mosotho	PhD	Overseas	5
Will	M	Black	Introduction to Sociology	South African	MA	EU (SA)	10
Lizzy	F	Black Afrikaans	Family Sociology	South African	BSocSc (Hons) Pursuing Master's degree	EU (SA)	3
Vaal	F	White Afrikaans	Consumerism and Consumption	South African	PhD	EU (SA)	17
Rose	F	White Afrikaans	NA	South African	BA (Hons), Post graduate diploma in HE	SA research intensive university	15

4.9 Inclusive university FoH staff headcount

An overview of permanent academic staff (Table 4.5) shows that the FoH had 139 permanent staff members. There were 31 professors, 15 associate professors, 19 senior lecturers and 74 lecturers.

Table 4.5: FoH staff headcount in 2012

Support Total	Rank of staff member	Permanent	Temporary academic
Instructional /research	Professor	31	00
	Associate professor	15	00
	Senior lecturer	19	00
	Lecturer	74	00
Instructional /research Total		**139**	**51**

Source: IU Faculty report 2012

Among the permanent academic staff, 74 were PhD holders, 63 had master's degree and 2 had honours degrees as shown in Table 4.6. The faculty employed 51 academic staff on temporary basis and their qualifications were not available.

Table 4.6: Status of qualifications of permanent academic staff			
	Qualification level	**Permanent academic staff**	**Temporary academic**
Instructional /research	PhD	74	
	MA degree	63	
	Honours degree	02	
Instructional /research Total		**139**	**51**

Source: IU 2015

4.9.1 IU Sociology Department and lecturer profiles

The DoS had 14 permanent staff members: three professors, three assistant professors, two senior lecturers and four lecturers (Table 4.7). Nine members were PhD holders and this group was much more diverse in terms of qualifications.

Table 4.7: DoS Instructional staff headcount in 2014				
Qualification level	**Rank of staff member**	**Permanent**	**Temporary**	**Total**
Doctoral	Professor	3	0	3
	Assistant Professor	3	0	3
	Senior lecturer	2	0	2
	Senior Researcher	1	0	1
	Academic/ Research Associates	0	4	4
	Lecturer	1	0	1
Master's degree	Lecturer	3	0	3
Master's degree	Assistant lecturer	1	0	1
Instruction / Research Total		**14**	**4**	**18**

Source: DoS IU (2015)

Interviews were conducted with six undergraduate lecturers who were largely involved in the curriculum design and pedagogy of various modules. As indicated previously, some

participants were course coordinators and were in charge of designing, revising and or updating course modules. The participants' biographic details were captured. To protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used in the study (Table 4.8 below). Janet, Mary, Trace and John were PhDs holders while Thomas and Abby were master's degrees holders. Five participants obtained their qualifications at IU while Trace had pursued her post graduate studies at another research intensive university in South Africa.

Table 4.8: IU lecturer profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Nationality	Highest Educational Qualification	Where obtained	Number of years lecturing
Mary	F	White Afrikaans	South African	PhD	IU [SA]	10
Trace	F	Black	South African	PhD	SA research intensive university	12
John	M	Black	Zimbabwean	PhD	Zimbabwean university IU [SA]	7
Thomas	M	Indian	South African	BA Hons, Master's degree	IU [SA]	3
Abby	F	White	South African	BA Hons, MA	IU [SA]	5
Janet	F	White	South African	PhD	USA	20

4.10 Student sampling

The target population was honours students who had completed their bachelor of sociology degree at the department under study. Although potential participants averaged 12, some of them were not eligible. These included students who graduated with a bachelor's degree of which sociology was not a major from universities other than EU or IU while others did not consent to participate. For example at EU, the number of eligible participants was nine, three of which were unwilling to participate, leaving six eligible students. Faced with small numbers in both case studies, I decided to interview all students who consented to take part in the study. This means that while the sampling was conceptualised as purely purposive, it ended up being exhaustive sampling. A term which is closer to exhaustive sampling in meaning is criterion sampling. Patton (1990: 176) defines criterion sampling as the selecting

all cases that meet some criterion. In this case, it means students who completed their sociology undergraduate degree at either EU or IU. This approach was useful as I interviewed all students who fitted the pre-specified criterion. The next section presents student profiles according to gender, race, nationality, type of school attended, parents/guardian occupation, the number of years taken to complete undergraduate degree, and whether they were first-generation[27] students. Such background information tells us about the 'resources' that the student possessed or what they brought with them to university. These factors have an effect on how they convert available resources into functionings (Walker 2015).

4.10.1 EU student backgrounds

Data was drawn from interviews conducted with five honours students who had studied for their undergraduate degree at EU. Students' biographic details were captured (Table 4.9). All participants were first-generation university students. Two students went through the extended programme[28]. Five of them were black[29] and the other Indian. The honours class had a total of 12 students who were all eligible for the study and from those, three declined to participate.

[27] The first person in a family to attend university.

[28] Extended programmes assist students with proven potential but without adequate entry grades for university degree programmes. An additional year of study is added to a mainstream degree programme. This extra year is utilised to prepare students, by means of additional academic support, for specific mainstream subjects and for university studies in general.

[29] Black means dark skinned.

Table 4.9: EU Students' biography							
Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Race**	**Nationality**	**Low cost/high cost fee[30]**	**The first in your family to go University**	**Parent/Guardian occupation**	**Number of years to complete undergrad degree**
Emma	F	Black	South Africa	Low cost	Yes	Parents do not work	4 (Took extra modules)
Judy	F	Black	South African	Middle cost	Yes	both parents are teachers	3 with 1 year excluding 1 year EP
Lisa	F	Indian	South African	High cost	Yes	Father is an engineer	3
Memory	F	Black	South African	Low cost	Yes	Parents do not work	3 with 1 year excluding 1 year EP
Precious	F	Black	South African	Middle cost	Yes	Father is a commercial farmer	3. 5 years

4.10.2 IU student backgrounds

The data was drawn from interviews conducted with five honours students who had studied at IU. As with EU, students' biographic details were captured (Table 4.10). The students were all first-generation university students. All the students were black, four were females and they all belonged to the low or lower middle class. The honours class had a total of 11 students and from those, nine were eligible for the study but three declined to participate because they were busy with their studies. All the students completed their degrees in three years unlike other South African students who take longer to finish their studies[31].

[30] Townships/rural schools with low fees referred as low cost while urban/high fees regarded as high cost schools.

[31] Few (estimated to be one in four) students complete their studies in the regulated time (three years).

Table 4.10: IU Students' biography

Pseudonym	Gender	Race	Nationality	High cost/Low cost school	Are you the first in your family to go University	Parent/ occupation	Number of years to complete undergrad degree
Keith	M	Black	South African	Low cost	Yes	Low class	3
Prudence	F	Black	South African	Low cost	yes	Lower middle class	3
Rejoice	F	Black	South African	High cost	Yes	Middle class	3
Ray	M	Black	South African	Middle cost	Yes	Low class	3
Ruth	F	Black	South African	Low cost	Yes	Lower middle class	3

Issues of race, gender, and class were not taken into consideration as exhaustive sampling was employed.

4.11.1Organisation of analytical codes

Since interpretative inquiry informed this research, meaning was not drawn from fractured variables. Thomas (2011) postulates that to understand qualitative data, one has to study and interpret meanings that people in a given context construct. Data analysis for this study was guided by steps suggested by Cohen which begin with the establishment of a unit of analysis, followed by domain creation, establishment of linkages between domains as well as validation and interpretation of data (Cohen et al. 2007). To begin with, the audio recordings of the interviews were transcribed and uploaded onto N-Vivo 10, a software analysis package for qualitative data storage and retrieval. N-Vivo assisted me in the organisation and storage of the data. The data was organised according to the two participant groups, the students and lecturers.

Firstly, data was organised according to questions asked. In this case, all relevant data from different participants in a set was grouped to provide a relative answer to each question, depending on probes used. My analysis was guided by open coding, thus open to emerging

themes but also guided by the capabilities approach principles. Codes were generated from the data to avoid theoretical over-determination, meaning that the interpretation was open to surprises from the data. I borrowed this approach from principles of grounded theory which advocate for an open bottom-up approach.

The second step involved the identification of recurring themes, ideas and concepts from different data sets (Marshall and Rossman 1995). This process involved going through the transcripts manually several times, comparing each element, sentence, and paragraph with other elements of the write up. The result was the identification of a smaller number of significant codes (through coding in N-Vivo 10), domains or categories and interconnections which were important in building blocks of analysis. However, similar dimensions such as knowledge and critical thinking, economic opportunities and having the opportunity to experience good teaching emerged from the lecturer and student data sets across both cases. The themes (capability dimensions) were categorised into seven dimensions (see Table 9.1 and 9.2). Data sets for EU an IU were analysed separately, as well as those of the two groups. However, they were no major differences in the information provided by the students and lecturers in both cases. This may be attributed to the nature of the sociology discipline which largely advances the critical discourse. However, there were some differences in perceived achievement as reported by lecturers and students in the two case studies. The advantage of such an analysis is that similar themes and patterns coming from different data streams could be linked (Cohen et al. 2007).

In line with the data analysis steps suggested by Cohen (2007), the third stage establishes linkages between codes/domains thus giving deeper meaning to the data, making speculative inferences and 'reading behind the lines'. Some of the valued functionings (such as multiple perspectives and ability to excel academically) were collapsed or combined under main over-arching themes such as knowledge and critical thinking. The fourth stage of the analysis was data validation. At this stage, data was validated through triangulating the findings from three sources: students, lecturers and the document analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994). As suggested by Denzin (1978), feedback was sought from participants where necessary. The fifth stage of data analysis involved finding possible explanations of the findings. At this stage, the key findings of the research were identified, comments made on how they diverged from the literature and the implications of these findings. The final stage of the process was synthesising the findings into a thesis report.

Although I have outlined the steps that I followed in data analysis, the process was intuitive, hence analysis commenced simultaneously with data collection. As Merriam (2009) notes, early analysis of data informed the questions further and reduced the problem of data overload by highlighting significant areas to focus on. Field notes were written after every interview to record outstanding issues and document the data collection process.

As indicated in Section 4.2.2, during document analysis I collected documents such as course outlines/syllabuses, course modules, past exam papers, course evaluation forms, and other relevant curriculum documents. Some information such as modules and programmes was sought from official departmental websites and the 2015 student prospectus. The documents were grouped according to: i) University–vision and mission statements; ii) Faculty documents –vision and mission statements, graduate attributes iii) Department –vision and mission statements, educational philosophy, graduate attributes; and iv) Module or course outline –modules offered, structure of Bachelor of Social Science. The university, Faculty and Departments vision, and mission statements or graduates attributes were listed and compared to the data collected from lecturers and students. This allowed me to critically examine the sociology departments' representation of itself in print. Also, what was on print was compared to lecturers and students voices.

The whole process of data analysis involved organising and interpreting the data in terms of participant's definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities. Overall, the capabilities approach guided the research questions, data collection and analysis.

4.12 Validity, reliability and rigour

In qualitative research, validity refers to whether the findings of a study are trustworthy. The findings should accurately reflect the situation and be evidence based, unlike earlier versions of validity which focussed on whether the research instrument measures what it purports to measure (Joppe 2000). Reliability is defined as the extent to which results are consistent over time (Ibid). It is concerned with replicability, questioning the extent to which the results of the research can be reproduced or the consistency of the research findings (Kvale 1996). To ensure consistency, the study used three sources of information: sociology students, sociology lecturers and document analysis. Interviewing both students and lecturers allowed me to triangulate data. Patton (2002) notes that comparison or using different data sources increases the validity and consistency of a study. However, it is also problematic if one assumes that the different data can add up in some way to a 'truth'.

Since some lecturers had reservations about participating in the study, as explained in Section 4.5, document analysis augmented data collected from the interviews. In addition, the iterative nature of semi-structured interviews further informed my questions, the literature, probes and data collection strategies and also offered an opportunity to clarify areas of agreement and divergence from stakeholder groups (Patton 2002). Informed consent was also important for the collection of 'honest' data, although this cannot be guaranteed in a qualitative research. It was my duty as the researcher to explain in detail the purpose of the study and to address all concerns raised before the interviews commenced. With the exception of a few lecturers at EU, most respondents voluntarily participated in the study and this helped in ensuring some kind of trust between me and them (Shenton 2004). Debriefing sessions with my supervisors and colleagues were held regularly. From these sessions, I received feedback which added value to the whole data collection process. Having outlined the reliability and validity issues I now turn to ethical considerations for the study.

4.13 Ethical considerations

Research ethics deals primarily with the interaction between researchers and the people they study. Whenever we conduct research on people, the well-being of participants must be our priority. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), codes of ethics for researchers are the conventional format for moral principles. Broadly, ethical principles are concerned with acting correctly and avoiding harm. My aim was to advance a capabilities-inspired curriculum, which ultimately contributes to students' well-being and social justice in higher education. I, however, took precautions that my study did not expose or hurt the participants in any way. It was my duty as a researcher to ensure that participants were well informed about the research. I explained the purpose of the study, the costs and benefits of participation and the nature of activities that comprised participation. Potential participants were given enough time to read the consent form and ask questions. During the consent process, emphasis was put on privacy and confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the risks of participating. Anonymity of the participants was ensured as the consent form was not linked with the data collected from individuals. Participants were informed about their right to decline to answer specific questions or withdraw from the study (see Appendix 2 and 5 for information sheets and Appendix 3 and 6 for consent forms). Approval for the study was sought from the University of Free State as well as both EU and IU (see Appendix 7 for ethical approval). During the research period, data was accessed by me and my supervisors at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED). In terms of results

dissemination, I am responsible for communicating results generated to study participants at both case studies. Dissemination workshops have been scheduled for 2017. Table 4.11 presents the stages that have been explained in this chapter.

Table 4.11 Ethical issues stages

Thematising	Aim is to improve human well-being and achieve social justice in higher education through curriculum
Designing	Dealing with informed consent, securing confidentiality
Interviewing setting	Confidentiality and risk clarification
Transcription	Reproduction of interviewee oral statements
Analysis	Organisation of data and making meaning
Verification	Reporting on verified knowledge
Reporting	Publishing report and sharing with study participants

Source: Kvale 1996

4.14 Limitations of the study

Throughout the research, it was observed that the respondents, particularly students, were not interested in spending a lot of time participating in the research. They raised concerns about time constraints because their honours programme was intense and demanding. For example, it took three attempts to schedule an interview with one student. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to an hour or more, depending on the respondent. In some instances, crucial information might have been missed. Although the number of student participants was sufficient, a larger number might have yielded more data. The other limitation was on the data analysis. Despite my supervisors' assistance with the analysis, I interpreted the data alone and my preconceived biases might have indirectly influenced the findings. In addition, the analysis was conducted systematically using codes that allowed me to draw out key themes and use them in the context that they were given. Because of the small sample, the results are not generalisable but they provide insights into the design of undergraduate sociology curriculum in South Africa and beyond.

4.15 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the fundamental elements of qualitative research that informed the study. The justification and rationale were given for the use and adaptation of the interpretative paradigm, the adoption of a qualitative research design, the use of semi-structured interviews, the sampling procedures as well as data collection and analysis. The

background information of the faculties, sociology departments and participants was also given. This chapter emphasised the study's concern with understanding curriculum design issues in-depth from the lived life of the participants. Finally, the overarching limitations and ethical considerations associated with this study were explained as well as the precautions taken to guarantee objectivity while minimising bias in data collection.

In the next chapter, I turn to the results of the study. Findings for each university are arranged in two chapters. Chapter 5 discusses EU lecturer perspectives; Chapter 6 examines EU student perspectives while Chapters 7 and 8 focus on IU lecturer and student perspectives respectively.

Chapter 5: Lecturers' experiences and perspectives on curriculum and pedagogy at Equality University

> "To educate a person in the mind but not in morals is to educate a menace to society". (Theodore Roosevelt N.D.)

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents data on lecturer's experiences and perspectives on curriculum design at Equality University (EU) in South Africa. This chapter addressed the following questions:

i) What understandings of sociology as an academic discipline inform the development of curriculum and its operationalisation in the teaching of sociology at undergraduate level in the case study university department?

ii) What student functionings are valued by sociology lecturers in constructing a curriculum?

iii) To what extent are curriculum intentions aligned with pedagogical approaches? (see Appendix 4 for the lecturer interview schedule).

In order to address these questions, the chapter draws on the lecturers' voices. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section locates the Sociology Department in the Faculty of Humanities (FoH) and the second section presents views, experiences and voices of a sample lecturers (N=5) and the conclusion.

Since the department falls under the FoH, this section provides a general overview of the faculty and the DoS. There was no policy or objectives guiding the curriculum in the DoS, and the education provided could be foregrounded within the broader vision and mission of the faculty (Table 5.1). The key words have been bolded in the mission statement in order to examine the extent to which the DoS teaching was in alignment with the department's mission and vision. The Faculty aimed to value knowledge, critical approaches, to inspire students and encourage service to community and so on. From the key words, I noted that, with the exception of *critical intellectual investigations* and *teaching aimed at enriching the community*, there was nothing more that directly linked the statements to human development and capabilities formation. It was not by coincidence that critical thinking was mentioned; the humanities and sociology in particular, advance real public value (Brewer 2013) and the critical discourse. The statements did not address issues of employability, an issue prominent in both the HCT and human capabilities approach.

Table 5.1: EU FoH vision statements	
Vision	To be an excellent, creative and equitable Faculty of the Humanities, responsive to the needs of society
The mission of the faculty is to:	• generate, introduce and disseminate **knowledge**, • stimulate **critical** intellectual investigation and • **Inspire innovation** in both students and academic staff by means of teaching, basic and applied research, and service delivery aimed at **enriching and uplifting** the **community**, the region, the country and the continent.

Source: EU FoH (2015)

The FoH offered students three fields of study: Letters and Philosophy, Arts, and Social Sciences. The three fields offered several first year degree programmes and diplomas, with students having a choice to select the curriculum that best suited their needs. The students in the FoH had an option to major in five subjects namely: sociology, psychology, criminology, anthropology and social work. After three years, students graduate with a Bachelor of Social Sciences in the chosen field of specialisation. The structure of the Bachelor of Social Sciences was prescribed to align with the NQF[32] as explained in Chapter 1. The structure of the Bachelor of Social Sciences comprised compulsory, core and electives courses. The degree ordinarily entailed the completion of 420 semester credit hours. Compulsory modules constituted thirty two credit hours. Core modules accumulated 128 credit hours in the first year, and another 128 hours in second year as shown in Table 5.2. In the first two years, students are expected to take two major subjects from criminology, psychology or sociology. In third year, students are required to accumulate 64 credits in two subjects of a chosen area of specialisation. It is at this point that students could opt to specialise in sociology meaning that only a sixth of the credit hours is taken up by the study major. This structure allows students to study many subjects and the system requires them to compile their curriculum. The advantage of such an approach is that students are introduced to many courses. However, this may raise concerns about the possibility of student's lack of in-depth knowledge in any subject, especially when students proceed to honours level.

[32] NQF stipulates the expected graduate outcome at each qualification level.

Table 5.2: Structure of Bachelor of Social Science

	Module	Credits	NQF level
i) Compulsory modules	Community service learning (final year)	16	NA
	Undergraduate core curriculum	16	NA
	Computer literacy	4	NA
ii) Core modules: In first year students are expected to take two major subjects on first year to make 128 credits from each of two subjects (2 semesters x32=64x2=128).	Criminology	32	Level 5
	Psychology	32	
	Sociology	32	
Second year students are expected to take two major subjects on second year to make 128 credits from each of two subjects.	Criminology	32	Level 6
	Psychology	32	
	Sociology	32	
Third year students are expected to take 64 credits from the third subject	Criminology	32	Level 7
	Psychology	32	
	Sociology	32	
iii) Electives modules: A further 64 credits from any of these subjects	Anthropology	32	NA
	Communication Science	32	
	History	32	
	Industrial Psychology	32	
	Political Science	32	
	Labour law	16	
	Philosophy	16	
	A modern language	16	
Total credits		**420**	

Source: EU (2015)

5.1.1 Overview of the DoS

Although the FoH provided the broader vision, the DoS did not have its own vision but had an unclear qualitative proclamation as its mission statement. Its mission strives towards quality teaching in their under- and postgraduate programmes through a sociological approach. The quality education that they aim to provide was not explained on their website, leaving it open to the reader's interpretation. The mission statement described three ways in which sociological knowledge could help students to: i) Deal with the past and to look to the future; ii) Appreciate diversity; and iii) Deal with current societal problems and strive for the creation of a better society for all (EU 2015). Whilst the department does not mention human development or capabilities formation, the three points fit and align well with capabilities formation and the normative values of teaching/designing sociology curriculum/pedagogy.

They bring to the fore the notion of hope, as students may start to visualise things that they value or they may have reason to value in the future. An appreciation of diversity sits well with the notion of global citizenship and helping students treat each other more humanely. The third notion of dealing with societal problems brings to the fore critical thinking, analytical approaches and having multiple perspectives. The website provided no further information on broader aims and objectives of the education. Although the DoS did not mention critical thinking or service to community in its mission statements, we can assume that they incorporated these indirectly[33].

The department further listed major components that are included in different sociological courses for example, family, religion, education, politics, gender, population and economics (EU 2015). Some of the courses taught in the department include: 'General Sociology', 'Sociology of Development', 'Sociology of Population and Environment', 'Industrial Sociology', 'Sociological Theory', 'Sociology of the Family' and 'Research Methodology'. Although the course titles are listed, the department did not provide course descriptions, the teaching provided, course objectives or any other information. This could imply that prospective students might be unaware of the course content.

A total of 852 students were enrolled in the DoS in 2014. Of these, 720 were first year students and 132 were second and third year students.

Table 5.3: EU Student enrolment

2014	Qualification name	Senior students	First time students	Grand total
Sociology	BSocSci	132	720	852

Source: EU 2015

I now consider lecturer's perspectives and attitudes towards curriculum design and pedagogy.

5.2 Outline of perceptions from lecturers

The key codes that emerged from the data analysis inform the discussion on lecturers' perspectives and attitudes towards curriculum design and pedagogy. These codes are: access to university, curriculum development and knowledge acquisition, student functionings, pedagogical relationships, employability and systematic constraints. The chapter starts by discussing lecturers' views on students' access to university and their perceptions on how

[33] These are referenced but the vision and mission statements cannot be named as it would compromise the university's anonymity.

students view the sociology major. The students' characteristics have an impact on student-lecturer relations and also have implications for curriculum design and pedagogy.

There were three routes leading to enrolment in the three year Bachelor of Social Science at EU. The first three year degree programme requires students to pass the National Senior Certificate (NSC) with Admission Points (AP) of 30 and the language of instruction (Afrikaans or English) with a minimum score of 50%. The second option is for students who were unsuccessful in gaining admission to the university through initial or normal admission procedures to follow a bridging programme to obtain access (a type of bridging year). This option requires students to pass the NSC with an AP of 25-29 and a minimum score of 50% in the language of instruction (Afrikaans or English). The second bridging route enrols students with an AP below 25 and there is no minimum duration to finish the degree programme (EU 2015). The bridging programme was introduced to cater for under-prepared students. Because of the poor secondary education system, many deserving students are not able to meet the university entrance requirements as well as those of other higher education institutions. Indications show that students who go through the bridging programme have a higher achievement rate than students enrolled through the initial admission process (UFS 2016).

Table 5.4 shows the different admission scores for the Bachelor of Social Science degree normal entry requirements and the extended programme requirements.

Table 5.4: Admission requirements for Bachelor of Social Sciences

Description of the Programme	**Admission requirement**	**Minimum study period**
Baccalaureus Societatis Scientiae majoring in Human and Societal Dynamics	NSC + AP of 30 Language of instruction on achievement level 4 (50%)	3
Baccalaureus Societatis Scientiae majoring in Human and Societal Dynamics [Extended programme]	National Senior Certificate with an admission point (AP) of 25-29	4

Source EU (2015)

As previously stated, within the South African education context, students are required to obtain a minimum of four (4) 50% school subjects and an overall admission point of 30 to

qualify for admittance to a Bachelor's degree or to apply to study at any South African university. Table 5.5 show admission points scores calculation[34].

Table 5.5: Admission points calculation at EU

NSC level of achievement	EU Admission point	All subjects offered at
90-100	8	Matric level
80-89	7	
70-79	6	
60-69	5	
50-59	4	
40-49	3	
30-39	2	
0-29	Fail	

Source: EU (2015)

The table also shows admission scores and the corresponding percentages for EU degrees. For example, the NSC level of achievement score of 90 or 50 corresponds to 8 and 4 admission points respectively. For an application to be successful, a student must pass with a minimum points required for the degree.

5.3 Access and success at university and in degree programmes

Interviews with the lecturers reflected the assumption that students who are enrolled in the FoH and social sciences were 'weak'. The FoH was regarded as the 'dumping site' for students who could not enrol in more competitive disciplines which require higher admission points scores. For example, students aspiring to join the Law Faculty were required to have at least 34 admission points at EU, compared to 30 for the Bachelor of Social Sciences[35]. According to the Report on the Bachelor of Social Sciences (DoS 2014), the majority of the students enrolled by the Faculty initially wanted to study something else and were not attracted by the curriculum. This could mean that some students did not enrol for the sociology degree because they valued the degree. Vaal explained:

> *The students are weak and the majority don't even know why they are here. I doubt that they knew anything about the curriculum when they enrolled.*

Lizzy pointed out that the majority of students ended up in the department by default[36]:

> *Truly speaking, only a few students, say 40% really want to enrol for the Bachelor of Social Sciences degree. The majority of our students were rejected other fields, for*

[34] Calculation of admission points differs according to the university.
[35] Admission points for the bridging course marked at 25 for Bachelor of Social Sciences.
[36] A student who opts for a degree programme that is not necessarily his/her first choice due to lack of information, lower grades, and wrong advice etc.

example, Medical school, law and so forth. So they end up in Bachelor of Social Science because they want to be at university.

All the participants indicated that the admission scores for the Bachelor of Social Sciences were low compared to those of other faculties. A review of the admission requirements revealed that other degree programmes such as law and social work required more than 30 admission points as shown in Table 5.4. For example, Bachelor of Commerce Law required 34 points. A number of reasons why competent students do not get attracted to the Faculty were given.Vaal raised her concern about the disregard of the social sciences:

Social science is not held in high esteem. There is nothing like, this is going to equip you for life. There is a recruitment process but it's as good as there is no screening of students. We have more than 600 first year students and I don't think we attract good students. I don't think social sciences have high standing in South Africa; people do it because they couldn't do anything else which is sad. It is seen as an easy subject because of the low entry points.

There were other disciplines which also enrolled students with admission points of 30, for instance, Bachelor of Commerce but it had an extra requirement of mathematics achievement level 4 (50%)[37]. Bachelor of Commerce Law and Bachelor of Medical Science had higher admission points scores requirements of 34 and 36 respectively and had a prerequisite of mathematics achievement level 5 (60%).

[37] Few students have a mathematics pass at matriculation in South Africa.

Table 5.6: Admission points for different programmes

Degree	AP scores	Admission requires
Bachelor of Arts, BSocSci (Human and Social Dynamics)	30	Language instruction on achievement level 4 (50%)
Baccalaureus in Social Work	30	Language instruction on achievement level 5 (60%)
Bachelor of Commerce	30	Language instruction on achievement level 4 (50%) Mathematics on achievement level 4 (50%)
Bachelor of Commerce Law	34	Language instruction on achievement level 4 (50%) Mathematics on achievement level 4 (50%)
Bachelor of Law	33	Language instruction on achievement level 6 (70%) Mathematics on achievement level 4 (50%)/ Mathematical Literacy on achievement level 6 (70%)
Bachelor of Medicine Science (Radiation Science)	36	Mathematics on achievement level 5 (60%) Physical Sciences on achievement level 5 (60%) Life sciences on achievement level 5 (60%)

Source: EU 2015

Contrary to some of her colleague's comments, Rose pointed out that the low AP requirement for the Bachelor of Social Sciences did not necessarily mean that students were 'weak'. It could be argued that this is an incorrect perception based on assumptions which fail to take contextual factors and human diversity into consideration. Rather, Rose regarded the students as 'different' from those in other faculties. She asserts:

> *People take the admission scores as the measure of student's ability but it's not. I think it is simply an expression of what they have been able to do at school given the very poor secondary educational system, but it's not a reflection of their actual ability. The students haven't been given enough support at school or at home to be able to show and express their potential. As a result lecturers have a perception that they are weak. What they don't realise is that they are just not Bachelor of Science students and that's all. [….] If a person can't do mathematics, science or accounting, it doesn't mean that they are useless. It is sad that the students perceive themselves as weak.* (Rose)

Rose was concerned about the poor quality of education offered in the secondary school system in South Africa:

> *We all know that the secondary education system in South Africa is weak. We enrol under-prepared students and we, at university, are trying to fix the weaknesses of the poor quality at secondary school*.

The underlying issue is that students come from different schooling backgrounds and that they are different as individuals. Rose indicated that less attention was paid to the diverse

needs of students. The interviews indicated that prospective students were also not given enough information at school about degree programmes on offer. This results in high school students choosing degree programmes or subjects they have little or no information on.

Two issues that emerged relating to student access were that: i) The FoH and hence the DoS can be said to recruit under-prepared students, which points to the quality of the secondary school system; and ii) Students had no desire to enrol in the FoH. This reflects that the students in the FoH and DoS may not value the humanities and the social sciences.

5.4 Curriculum design and knowledge acquisition

This section looks at the way curriculum has been developed and the lecturers' perceptions on knowledge acquisition. Four issues emerged namely, educational philosophy, content selection, NQF level, curriculum development, and student involvement.

5.4.1 Educational philosophy

The data suggests that there was no clear philosophical underpinning for the development of the undergraduate curriculum in the FoH and hence the DoS at EU. The lecturers highlighted that the department's activities fell within the broader vision of the FoH. However, when asked to state this vision, three lecturers failed to and instead referred me to their website:

> *We don't have a separate vision statement. Our vision is incorporated in our course curriculum. So we say in the first year we want students to be able to do this (the outcomes they set). We say after the students have done their first year in sociology they must have the following knowledge and they must have the following skills. They must think about the world in a specific way and in the second year as well. Our mission is to have a student who takes sociology from first year to the third year and attain these skills and knowledge.* (Noma)

This implies that the departmental aims, goals and objectives were not clear. The reason why students were learning what they were learning, how they were learning and how it was evaluated was not written or properly communicated. Had the DoS had a clear educational philosophy, it would possibly shape content selection, learning activities and curriculum evaluation as well as students experiences of the learning environment (Van Den Akker 2007). In this context, curriculum philosophy would also establish the criteria for determining the aims, selection, learning process, and outcomes.

Implicit in the above extract is the notion that aims and objectives are provided in individual courses while there is no broader goal at departmental level. As previously noted, there was

no clear link between the FoH vision and mission statements and the values that were provided in the qualitative statement provided by DoS. However, Rose disagreed, noting that various departments in FoH were expected to develop their own educational goals. She insisted that departments consist of academic experts who have the autonomy to define their goals. She remarked:

> *Curriculum development is very much left to departments and the FoH doesn't really monitor anyone. We kind of leave it to them because they are the (academic) experts. There is no one who dictates to the various departments (under FoH) how they conceptualise the curriculum.*

The approach is bottom-up, where academics are expected to develop a mission statement. While this approach potentially provides the opportunity for academics to be more involved in shaping the sociology graduates than in a top-down approach, the challenge is that there were not many experts in the department who were capable to make such contributions. The junior lecturers required assistance in curriculum design yet there were no clear mechanisms for that. Although there was lack of a broader philosophy, individual modules stated the aims, objectives and the learning outcomes. Some of the individual modules such as 'Introduction to Sociology' stated the module overview, module outcomes, themes and study materials at the beginning. Other courses such as 'Consumerism and Consumption' and 'Sociological Theory' did not provide overall course outcomes but provided a thematic overview and learning outcomes for each lecture. However, there was no uniformity in the course descriptions of modules because all teaching staff had autonomy over the curriculum. Noma commented:

> *What I must also emphasise is that the lecturer responsible for a course has some autonomy in deciding what's goes in (the curriculum). That's not prescribed by the HoD … because the assumption is that everyone who is teaching a particular course is an expert in their field. No one can come in and really say in 'Population and Environment' module you have to do xyz or the person that teaches 'Family Sociology' has to do this and that.*

With the exception of critical thinking, the qualitative statements relating to learning outcomes provided in the course modules were lacking in terms of the intended student competencies and abilities aimed for. It could be argued that the autonomy and agency of lecturers was exercised through the development of learning outcomes. However, the (common) themes that brought together the different kinds of learning across the board

remained unwritten. As a result, the consistent thread in the learning outcomes across the courses was not clear.

Peer review of the curriculum shaped the syllabus at EU. Lecturers claimed that the department collaborated with other internationally and nationally recognised sociologists in curriculum development. They indicated that they invited leading sociologists to peer review the curriculum every five years:

> *They (leading sociologists/consultants) spent a week with us, when they went through our modules. The consultants looked at the curriculum and they produced a report to say this is what you have on the table and this is what we suggest you change. We did that during the 2010/11academic year when we invited someone from A University[38] and the other person from B University. They went through our curriculum and interviewed lecturers and went to our classes. Based on their recommendations we made changes to our curriculum. In terms of benchmarking, that's the kind of things that we do*. (Noma)

In addition, lecturers claimed that they periodically undertake a systematic review of what is taught at different universities through website searches and benchmarking courses.

5.4.2 Content selection

According to the lecturers, curriculum development was done on the basis of their expertise. This involved carrying out research on current issues and trends in the discipline, as well as responding to topical issues at local and international level. This could be attributed to the autonomous nature of curriculum development where each academic was allowed to make inputs into the curriculum content as seen fit. Lizzy explained:

> *For 'Family Sociology', I believe there are certain things in our society or our country that affect individuals and families […] so the starting point is to identify and ask ourselves about the societal challenges. For example, what are the real issues that we are facing? What are the relevant societal issues? When I became the coordinator for a certain module, I consulted with my colleague and agreed that we needed to start addressing issues affecting family, gender, thus opening up spaces for homosexuals, issues around our cultural sexual things and HIV. The other thing that I enjoy doing is just browsing through the internet to check what other universities offer. It's a way of having a feel of contemporary issues. Common things from this kind of an exercise may show a trend on current issues.*

However, one could argue that sociological theories significantly influence content selection. The lecturers pointed out that the discipline of sociology is grounded in offering different

[38] Universities anonymised.

sociological perspectives to students. They emphasised that sociological theories assisted in explaining social change between individuals and social institutions. Sociological theories were therefore given precedence in the design of modules:

> *The theories are the basis of sociology and if we expose students to a range of theories, they can view the world in a different way. They can decide to say this makes sense in this context or maybe I can look at this issue from a different perspective and come with a totally different conclusion. … For students that is very valuable and I think that helps them to develop critical thinking.* (Will)

While theories assist in explaining what makes society, a review of study guides indicated that the 'Introduction to Sociology' course introduced the theoretical frameworks. Based on the analysis of the study guide, it seemed that the content on the theories was thin and therefore inadequately explains and introduces abstract theoretical concepts involved. In the same module, the concepts of positivism, critical theory and interpretative social science were explained briefly in one page despite being complex issues. Further questioning revealed that the depth of the study guides depended on the lecturer. Some topics required the lecturer to expand the notes in class. However, three lecturers concurred that the introductory sessions were not providing the necessary grounding:

> *The simplified notes we provide them with are designed for memorisation. You give students little snippets of information, for example, what is culture and students have to memorise the facts. I wonder why we don't give them assignments on theories by Weber, Marx and Durkheim and then ask them to explain what the theories say in detail. They get to do 'Social Theory' at third year level and never before do they learn a theory in detail.* (Vaal)

Given that the majority of students come from schools that inadequately prepare them for university, it is likely that they can face challenges in understanding complex theories, especially in the first year. Another significant constraint to the content selection is the lack of theories from the Global South. The lecturers highlighted that they continue to struggle to adequately explain some issues in the Global South using theories from the Global North:

> *Most theories originated from Europe while few are from South America and these are not very popular. There is this school for developing an African Sociology which is right but if we just get stuck on teaching students Marx, Weber, and Durkheim we will not serve our discipline well. This is what has been done for hundreds of years. Issues in South Africa call for different understanding and now it is our responsibility to go and look for academics in South Africa who can offer a sociological understanding and approach to issues that we are dealing with and that we move away from euro-centrism.* (Noma)

Although there were limited South African sociological books, the 'Introduction to Sociology' course used a South African textbook entitled 'Sociology: A South African Introduction' as the main content. The issues discussed under this banner, for example, race, poverty and white privilege, point to the need to decolonise the curriculum. An example could entail asking questions about the curriculum's response to issues of the reproduction of inequality in the South African context. In the capabilities approach, this calls for students, lecturers and relevant stakeholders to deliberate on what constitutes decolonisation and how they could possibly be addressed in the curriculum. This would incorporate what is valued by lecturers, students, and stakeholders.

5.4.3 NQF level and curriculum development

From the data, it emerged that the NQF descriptor levels influences lecturers when developing curriculum and pedagogy. Although the levels determine learning outcomes and facilitate student mobility from one university to the other through credit accumulation and transfer, the lecturers expressed reservations on the usefulness and practical implementation of courses to meet the defined outcome levels. Three of them argued that the descriptors are too general, abstract, and restrictive:

> *I just feel that the NQF levels are vague […]. This whole notion of cascading, scaffolding knowledge is idealistic and my frustration is that you have to structure your whole course around the levels. I totally agree that knowledge is constructed from first year, second year till third year, but with the NQF levels I feel they are very false and artificial. I think you (as the lecturer) have to gauge the level of your class because we get students who are under-prepared and sometimes a fair number of them at third year level still lack the knowledge they are expected to have at first year …. The framework provides benchmarks rather than what students should learn. We shouldn't change the curriculum according to the whims of DHET or whoever. We should have rationale in developing and changing the curriculum.* (Vaal)

Whilst Vaal suggests that the problem lies with the NQF, the department did not seem to have a rationale for designing the courses. Furthermore, lecturers acknowledged that university academic staff members are increasingly challenged by growing levels of accountability and workloads. They noted the lack of in-depth coverage in the introductory courses as the modules attempted to cover a great deal to meet the NQF requirements. The data suggests that there is too much to cover based on the NQF requirements within a short period of time. Vaal also commented:

I think the curriculum is too wide and like I say we are always on our toes responding to NQF requirements. It is a lot of work.

Will complained about workload pressure:

We are rushing things, for example, the sociological theories, methodology, culture, poverty and inequality and race are rushed through without necessarily digging deeper. These are big topics and I do not think we are doing justice on the depth. The result is that we risk producing half-baked cakes.

Will pointed out that various departments in the FoH did not engage on how to work together to meet the NQF levels despite sharing the same students. Consequently, sociology courses and those offered by other departments did not act as building blocks to each other. There was no sequencing or planned progression across programmes and courses. As stated in the EU Bachelor of Arts curriculum review Report[39], the unintended effect of such a situation is the proliferation of modules within disciplines. Rose commented on this:

Lecturers are required to achieve all the outcomes in one module which is a lot of work. The challenge is that the modules do not necessarily build on each other in such a way that the (NQF) requirements could be spread over a number of modules.

Another constraint that emerged from the interviews was the lack of discussion and coordination among the lecturers with regards to how to align courses. Vaal commented:

I am frustrated at times with lack of transparency between the different levels of modules that are provided between the years. I am involved with second years, third years and honours students, but I am frustrated with what I hear. I don't quite like the fact that at first year level there are very low standards in terms of the timeline for assignments and the awarding of marks. We don't really face each other on some of the weaknesses. Communication and coordination is important.

These findings suggested that lecturers may be faced with under-prepared students who are unable to engage with theories at the expected level because of a lack of understanding as well as language comprehension.

The design of the curriculum was largely influenced by the sociological canon and drawn from lecturer expertise. However, the quality of students (with low AP) enrolled at EU seemed to influence the depth and how the curriculum was organised. This required lecturers to engage with each other on how to organise their courses to achieve the intended

[39] EU commissioned external senior academics to review the Bachelor of Arts curriculum and they presented a report at the end.

curriculum outcomes, yet there was little evidence to suggest the existence of such engagements.

5.4.4 Student involvement

From the lecturers' perspectives, there seemed to be limited dialogue between lecturers and students about the content selection as well as student's personal and educational interests. Lecturers reiterated that opinions and suggestions were not solicited from students in most cases because they do not always know what is good for them. Vaal compared students to children who need parental guidance. She argued that lecturers were better placed to decide curriculum content:

> *I have years of experience. I know the field well, the main arguments, and the main issues that we need to examine. For example, my children sometimes they think that something is good for them when I know it isn't. So if I stick to their needs they might eat chocolate for breakfast, lunch and dinner because they think they need it and will I be a good mother? I think teaching is the same; sometimes what students think they need is not what they (actually) need. The students will always complain about the workload so would it be in their best interest to diminish the workload? For example, students want to write a summary of points on essay type questions after studying a few things and I know that it's not in their best interest. I think it's good to take what students say into consideration but sometimes as the lecturer I need to make the final decision. I have theoretical and practical background and knowhow on what should be the end result. In the long term this is better than just giving in to their demands.* (Vaal)

While decision making on behalf of the students is practical, what matters is the ability not only to expand their present but their future freedoms and opportunities. It is equally important that students are availed the freedom and the opportunity to suggest topics they would want to include in the curriculum. It is necessary to engage and provide space for them to be able to contribute to curriculum design. From the research, students' perspectives were only solicited through course evaluation exercises at the end of each module:

> *Students' input is captured through the student evaluation forms that they complete. Students are given forms which they complete at the end of each module and it covers a broad spectrum of issues like their experiences of the module in question, their views regarding the study material, the lecturer presentation of knowledge, the study material and all other aspects. After processing the completed forms we (lecturers) are able to analyse and get a sense of what students think could be improved, we get an idea of what students like so that maybe we can add more and expand on those and so forth.* (Will)

However, there were mixed feelings about the implementation of issues raised by students. What could be deduced from the interviews was that most lecturers consider students input

from these evaluation. However, data collected from EU students indicated that the students did not take the evaluation exercises seriously, especially during their first and second years. Based on that, one can argue that students' contribution to the design of curriculum was not an important aspect in curriculum development. First or second year students might be unable to contribute to the curriculum design because of struggling to grasp sociological basics. If this is the case, there was no evidence of planned initiatives to engage third year students who supposedly have a better appreciation of the field of study and some of the challenges relating to curriculum and pedagogy.

In sum, the DoS at EU seemed not to have a theoretical foundation to guide curriculum design. Whilst this does not imply bad teaching and learning, a philosophy that foregrounds active engagement, problem solving, debate, and case studies could encourage students think about and apply their minds broadly. Most modules are grounded on sociological theories and lecturers have the autonomy to determine the curriculum or the courses they taught. The lack of coordination and communication made it difficult for lecturers to identify common themes that could bring different courses together. Consequently, lecturers worked towards achieving NQF levels independently, thus increasing their workload. There is little evidence to show that the lecturers were acting to address these constraints.

5.5 Student functionings

The FoH listed attributes (also referred to as functionings in this study) which students could develop through the various programmes and courses offered on their website. These were: language proficiency, communication skills, creativity, interpersonal skills, problem solving skills, computer literacy and critical thinking. At departmental level, the DoS did not clearly articulate graduate learning outcomes. As previously stated in Chapter 3 (see Section 3.5), graduate functionings drawn from the literature did not determine or influence the data as the lecturers were asked to list student functionings they aimed to develop through the curriculum and pedagogy (see Table 5.7). It is important to note that these functionings were not weighted or ranked. The most common functionings were critical thinking, ability to analyse, having multiple perspectives, and the ability to conduct research.

Table 5.7: Lecturer attributes ranking					
	Noma	Lizzy	Vaal	Rose	Will
Critical thinking, being analytical	X	x	x	x	x
Sociological knowledge/ imagination	X	x	x	x	x
Multiple perspectives	X	x	x		x
To conduct research	X	x	x	x	x
Fit in different context	-	x	x	-	-
Good citizenship	-	-	x	x	-
Ability to write	-	-	x	x	-
Empathy	-	-	x	-	x

The course modules that were examined revealed that the most common functionings were critical thinking and development of sociological imagination. At departmental level, phrases such as 'critically reflect' or 'critically discuss' were stated as learning outcomes in course modules. One of the learning outcomes for the 'Population and Environment' module was to: '*Critically reflect on and debate the current policy responses to population change and environmental change'*. In 'Sociological Theory' it was to: '*Critically discuss the complexity of situating a specific paradigmatic analysis within the broader framework of a multi-paradigmatic approach'*. This shows some attempt to develop critical students.

At the end of each course, students were expected to answer essay-type questions or in-depth questions that required them to critically reflect about contemporary issues facing society. Lecturers highlighted that they used theories to develop critical thinking and the ability to analyse:

> *Sociology can contribute to any situation, any work situation. It enables one to be analytical and critical. We teach them to apply the Marxist perspective to question the hidden things, not taking anything at face value. They should try to understand the mechanisms of society, voicing discontent; for example, corruption, race etc, things that seem legitimate. They should have general knowledge of our history and the present, be able to predict the future, and read widely. We also teach people that their reality is not*

someone else's reality, taking into consideration that certain structures lead to other realities. (Vaal)

The intention to produce critical thinkers advances the critical discourse and lecturers reported that students became better equipped in terms of explaining and analysing sociological issues. However, the examples provided seemed abstract and as a result, lecturers were asked to differentiate between the ideal and the reality in terms of fostering critical thinkers. Their responses revealed their scepticism about graduates' critical thinking abilities. Lecturers who had studied at EU reiterated that when they graduated they did not possess most of these functionings:

I graduated from this department and what I can tell you is that I did not possess these skills (critical thinking, multiple perspectives etc). (Lizzy)

Vaal raised concerns about students' 'thin' knowledge base and how it compromises the formation of critical attributes:

I don't think you can be a critical thinker if you really don't know what you are criticising. Critical thinking is an empty signifier if the students do not have a firm base of knowledge. With a thin base of knowledge they can easily say the government is bad or corrupt, blah blah blah, without giving supporting evidence. So I don't think students are critical of society or knowledge. They are not able to ask critical questions.

One lecturer suggested that cultivating critical thinking was their responsibility. He argued that lecturers were not particularly trained in how to develop critical thinking skills and this is exacerbated by large undergraduate classes. Another indicated that functionings are developed at postgraduate level where classes are small. One lecturer commented:

I think lecturers don't have the skills to create critical thinkers and consequently students leave the university without being equipped with critical skills or with just little knowledge. After a student gets an honours or master's degree then we really start observing critical thinking. At undergrad, with three years of learning sociology, I don't think that they are getting critical thinking skills. They might debate, get the rights or wrong of something, but I doubt whether they could articulate issues in a critical manner, how things are developed, why they are developed, and figure out the way forward. If they get to postgrad then they will start moving in that direction. (Rose)

It was clear that despite knowing the importance of attributes, lecturers did not focus much on them when designing the curriculum:

I am extremely scared that we are not doing anything or enough about developing attributes. (Rose)

Rose went on to point out that they were not confident about their graduates' functionings:

We are even afraid to hire our own graduates. We are not confident with them, and this is related to the pressure that lecturers face. (Rose)

Thus it could be argued that the pressure for high throughput rates affects the quality of graduates produced by the department:

Despite not nurturing graduate attributes, the interviews showed that the FoH, DoS and lecturers were aware of important functionings and course outcomes for sociologists. However, the students did not have the required knowledge base; hence there were conflicting perspectives on the level of development or achievement of these functionings. Emphasis was put on producing critical and analytical graduates with multiple perspectives. There was evidence to support the development of these functionings. However, the lecturers disagreed on the level of intention to develop these, thus pointing to a gap between intention to achieve and achieved outcome. There was little evidence to show intentions of how other functionings, such as empathy or global citizenship were developed. Faced with large classes, it seemed lecturers were focussed more on completing the curriculum than developing functionings. Unlike the large undergraduate classes, the honours class had an average of 10 students. According to lecturers, this allows discussions, debates and more student-lecturer engagement central to the development of critical thinking. This leads us to a discussion on the importance of preparing students for the world of work, a point strongly raised by students.

5.6 Employment opportunities

Four lecturers regarded the sociology degree in human capital terms, emphasising the instrumental value of higher education. They indicated that sociology should be like other degrees that equip students with employment skills. They reiterated that students' unwillingness to study sociology was because of lack of a clear career path. Students prefer majoring in other disciplines such as psychology, which have clear career paths or equip them with clear employment skills:

Honestly, at undergraduate level I do not think students grasp the importance of sociology because only a few students want to pursue postgraduate studies in sociology. The majority want to study other subjects, for instance psychology. At the end of the day, sociology is the least of their concern. They just want to use sociology electives as a

stepping stone to other things. Even at third year level, students will still be asking for the kinds of jobs they will get as a result of studying for a sociology degree. (Lizzy)

Nobody wants to become a sociologist because of its curriculum or what they think they can become. Students often come to my office to enquire about the kind of work they will get with a sociology degree. Most of them want to become psychologists and social workers and not sociologists. (Rose)

However, others felt that the sociology degree must not be aimed towards a job per se, but more at developing skills such as critical thinking. The lecturers reiterated that the nature of the sociology discipline and that its curriculum should not dwell on preparing students for work. Lecturers reported that the discipline broadly equips students with skills that are useful and applicable for several career options. As one commented:

The nature of the field does not dwell directly on producing a graduate with a clear career path and that is a major concern for students. We do not train students for a particular profession but we produce an all-rounder kind of a graduate. (Rose)

Noma argued that employment opportunities are determined by the qualification that one possesses. Unfortunately, she noted that the Bachelor of Social Science was not highly regarded in the job market and graduates struggled to find work:

When one has a Bachelor of Social Sciences degree the employment opportunities are not great. I have had students coming to tell me they are so disappointed that they took the Bachelor of Social Sciences because no one told them they are not going to get jobs. Their chances of employment improve after their honours and master's degrees, especially, when they specialise in subjects like 'Population and Environment' and they can get employed in the Department of Social Development, Department of Rural Development, mining companies as sustainability officers, and as community engagement officers. Most students struggle and I find my students working in shops such as Musica, Clicks or Mr Price[40]. (Noma)

Vaal agreed that although preparing students for work is important, they were not focussing on that:

I feel a little bit guilty when students say what am I going to become as a result of studying sociology, [….]. I want all my students to get jobs because for me it is terrible that they have studied and do not get jobs.

However, Rose argued that it should not be the duty of universities to prepare students for work. She maintained that universities ought to produce global citizens who can contribute meaningfully to a better society. She commented:

[40] General shops that carry a broad selection of merchandise.

My instinct is that the humanities should prepare students for life, of which work is a part of. I think that's broader than preparing students for work only and I don't think we should be saying that's our job. I graduated with a humanities degree and nobody and nothing in my degree prepared me for work. I have been very successful because of what I learned. I don't think it is the job of universities to prepare somebody for work […..] and what work anywhere? The jobs that they are going into today won't be the same in five years' time, things are changing so fast. What skills do you want me to give them for work? The skills I will give them for life are team work, capacity to communicate, capacity to argue, capacity to be logical, capacity to look for information, and these are life skills. People keep asking me what they do with a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Social Sciences and I tell them that they can become what they want.

Rose refused to see preparation for work as important in the social sciences. Although she considered skills such as the capacity to communicate and critical thinking important, she argued that the job market was dynamic hence the need to produce graduates who could adapt and fit in different situations. She insisted that the broadness of the sociology discipline was advantageous for the students as they could choose different career paths that were important to them. While it is advantageous that sociology graduates could follow various career paths, the disadvantage is that graduates might not have acquired specific expertise. Lizzy disagreed with Rose, noting that a qualification determined employment opportunities. However, she pointed out that students should pursue postgraduate studies as that could give them a competitive edge on the job market:

It depends on how you market yourself but it's not easy. The honours degree is a better qualification as it gives a competitive edge. Most of the guys with honours degrees are working in government departments.

These findings suggest that lecturers generally had a human capital perception of a sociology degree. The few with a contrasting view did not look down upon issues of employability but insisted that students should pursue postgraduate studies that could equip them with skills necessary in both human development and human capital terms.

5.7 Pedagogical relationships

The pedagogical arrangements were mainly technical[41] in nature and students were largely dependent on lecturers' notes and course work. Different pedagogical styles were not identified to cater for the diverse student body beforehand. The main teaching method was

[41] Technical in this instance refers to the technological transfer of knowledge from lecturer to students without consideration for personal characteristics such as family background, previous schooling, sex, age, race etc that might affect learning experiences.

through lectures. A typical lecture took place in a lecture room or auditorium, with the lecturer teaching in front of the class. Writing boards and overhead projectors were provided in all the lecture rooms. Students sat wherever they wanted and the rooms were designed to ensure that the lecturer had eye-contact with most students. Most commonly used during lectures were PowerPoint presentations, group and case study discussions to deliver and engage with the subject content. The least used teaching methods included group work and digital resources as shown in the Table 5.8 (As with functionings, the teaching methods are not weighted).

Table 5.8: Teaching methods

Method of delivery	Noma	Will	Lizzy	Vaal	Rose
PowerPoint	x	x	x	x	x
Group discussion in lecture	x	x	x	x	x
Case studies in lecture	x	x	x	-	x
Posting notes on Blackboard	-	x	x	x	x
Tutorial	x	x	x	-	-
Other digital methods	-	-	x	x	-

There was limited engagement between students and staff. In lectures, PowerPoint presentations were mainly used as they were regarded as convenient and easily accessible to large classes. Given the average undergraduate class size of 700, 750 and 400 students for first, second and third year respectively, PowerPoint slides are a flexible teaching and learning support tool. However, in literature, the use of PowerPoint has been criticised because it is teacher centred and encourages student inactivity in class (Jones 2003). Discussions, debates and practical activities which require more interaction between students and lecturers are not frequently used as one participant, Will, explains:

> *If we have 650-750 students in the first year class how do we implement the participatory approach in that kind of environment?*

Relationships hinged more on technology than on personal contact. Lecturers used the Blackboard[42] to post notes and relevant course material for students. While technologies such as Blackboard were convenient, lecturers were concerned that they discouraged students from reading widely as they tended to over-rely on lecturers' notes. Will remarked:

[42] Blackboard is a software application used to power virtual learning environments to enable students to access notes online.

One of the killers of learning is the technology we have. Students are not reading textbooks as a result of Blackboard. If they are given an assignment they will reproduce the notes and if say they get say 12 out of 20, they will complain why they didn't get better scores. Students over-rely on Blackboard notes which I think probably kills their enthusiasm and curiosity to acquire more knowledge and skills.

Development of functionings was compromised as students crammed or memorised content for exam purposes. For example, critical thinking development would be minimal as students memorised and reproduced notes during the examinations. This seems to suggest minimum engagement beyond the provision of notes on Blackboard. When asked to comment about the Blackboard notes, lecturers disagreed on the amount of detail the notes should have. Some maintained that students should read widely and complement the information provided, while others suggested that it was better to provide detailed slides:

Why should they come to class if they get the PowerPoint slides on Blackboard and have textbooks? If we go to class to teach, we try to make it easier by providing examples but they don't take notes. How do they revise if they don't take notes? (Vaal)

Others argued that teaching methods were constantly changing and ought to be determined by the students' needs. The underlying point is that most students come from a poor quality schooling system and are therefore under-prepared for university education. The lecturers noted that 'spoon-feeding' students was also not good for their development and it does not stimulate active learning. Noma commented:

I remember when I started my first degree in 1990, sociology was one of my subjects and we were given an A5 module guide with instructions for us to read a book by Kortze. The lecturer would say, here is your book and read Chapter X on theories and goodbye! When we went to class, we were expected to discuss the readings. We had to come to class prepared. In the tests and exams, there would be a question on theories and no one would know what to expect of it, whether it would be on the historical materialism of Marx or what? Over the years, students' expectations have driven our curriculum and we are giving more comprehensive module guides which spell out everything in detail. We say these (materials) are for long questions and these are for short questions. In terms of teaching, you don't go to class and read from the book anymore, which is what our professors used to do.

Although the lecturers claimed that students' expectations were driving curriculum design and pedagogy, there was less evidence beyond what lecturers claimed. All the participants noted that they used teaching case studies to evaluate social norms, conditions, and

institutions. The common examples given by lecturers included the 'Marikana massacre'[43] and the 'Rhodes Must Fall movement'. In these case studies, lecturers indicated that students were required to apply sociological reasoning, unravel and analyse problems as well as develop solutions:

> *There was the Marikana tragedy that happened in 2012. I used it as a case study where students were expected to examine what happened and apply the theory of collective behaviour. This required them to apply their minds to the whole tragedy, think about how it could have been prevented, identify the hidden social forces that played a role, and what could be the healing process? The students were able to analyse, work together, and relate to the problems of the workers. They appreciated that the workers did not just get up one morning planning to strike. There were certain conditions that led to the tragedy. So after such engagement and discussions, students must be in a position to look at the tragedy from different standpoints to critically analyse, and understand other people from their own perspective.* (Will)

Lecturers identified tutorials as one of the most effective ways in which students could learn in an environment with limited resources. Tutorials were seen as beneficial in terms of engagement and recognition:

> *I do not think we are doing justice pedagogically; the level of engagement is generally low. But in tutorials, students are able to participate and be recognised. Students want to be recognised, and to be encouraged to be themselves. They want to be seen that I am here. We have already started to extend our support to all our students in the form of tutorials. We are making more time available and resources within the tutorials system because students who come from schools in townships and rural environments arrive at this huge place (university) and feel lost. The tutorial system allows them to have a sense of belong to a group. One tutorial group has between 20 and 25 students. Last year (2014) a tutorial group used to have more than 40 students so we have halved the size of the tutorial groups.* (Rose)

Tutorials usually had an average of 25 students and were held once a week. In tutorial sessions, the tutor-student ratio was low thus improving the level of engagement. Although lecturers acknowledged that tutorial attendance was associated with improved academic performance, attendance was not compulsory. The instructional strategies used seemed more technical in terms of delivering the knowledge to students as it paid little or no attention to diversity, especially to the majority of the students who came from poor secondary schooling system.

[43] The 'Marikana massacre' was the police operation that led to the deaths of at least 34 striking miners in the mining town of Marikana in 2012 in South Africa.

5.8 Systemic constraints facing sociology teaching and learning

Although lecturers claimed to have the desire to produce graduates with critical thinking skills through the curriculum and pedagogy, there were factors that constrained them from achieving that. These factors included but were not limited to the pressure for throughput rates and students' laissez-faire approach to learning and lecturing.

The first concern was pressure to maintain and increase throughput rates which are linked to the broader economic development agendas (see Chapter 2). If the throughput rate for a particular course dropped, the lecturer in charge was required to write a report. The lecturers were frustrated that they were expected to do so much for the student to pass:

> *There is a lot of pressure and the onus is on the lecturer for students to pass and not so much on the student. We must do so much to get the students through in three years and I think lecturers are frustrated by that.* (Noma)

As a consequence of the high pressure for throughput rates, quality and functionings development were compromised. In some instances, lecturers were forced to choose between the development of functionings and throughput rates:

> *In fact, most lecturers are caught between producing a high pass rate and trying to produce students with sociological skills and can critically analyse situations. I suspect that a large percentage of lecturers end up pleasing our master through high pass rates whilst neglecting the development of well-rounded students. Unfortunately, that's the truth (laughs). As a department, there is pressure to have high pass rates and that trickles down to lecturers.* (Will)

However, one lecturer disagreed that they compromised standards due to pressure. She argued that they were doing their best to maintain the standards in difficult circumstances:

> *There is pressure to make students pass but we try to work against that and protect the discipline. If we make students pass for the sake of high throughput rates or to make everyone see that we have done our job, that's not right. I tell my colleagues that lets fight on the ground, let's fight on each module to get the students through. If the students are not passing then we can argue that the problem lies with the students, but if we have not done our part, we cannot just say we have 'weak' students. It is our ethical responsibility to do what we can to get the students through […]. If we are not satisfied with their performance, we should be able to fail them but that's where the problem is.* (Noma)

Lecturers shifted blame when asked about challenges faced in curriculum development. Commenting on pressure to maintain high throughput rates, Vaal pointed out:

I am marking assignments now and I sometimes feel we (lecturers) have to make them pass. It's about damage control.

The interviews suggested that lecturers were succumbing to pressure to maintain and increase high throughput rates. The pressure was interfering with their professionalism as they ended up awarding marks to 'undeserving' students. This was also regarded by other lecturers as a coping mechanism. Most lecturers interviewed did not voice their concern to their managers, which suggests a lack of agency on their part.

The second concern to emerge from the interviews was students' laissez-faire approach to learning. The nature and attitude of students was a concern for lecturers. They highlighted that student absenteeism, lack of enthusiasm and interest was hindering them from doing their work properly. The lecturers wanted students to play their part, as one remarked:

I can show you my class attendance list. On the 11th of May [2014], the class attendance was terrible. They do not come to class. Those who come should be prepared for classes. If students read before coming to class, sat and took notes, actually wrote down something while someone was speaking, that would be helpful. Taking down notes is an art that is refined over a long period of time. We can't shift the blame and take all the blame from the students all the time. At the end of the day, they are the students and we are there to help them, to support them, and to be the conduit towards their success. (Vaal)

The lecturers highlighted that they found it helpful for students to work together as part of their study. One lecturer suggested that there was intergenerational gap between students and older lecturers. The majority of the lectures were over 40 years whilst the students were in their early twenties. Vaal pointed out that lecturers seemed to teach abstract concepts, which students, particularly under-prepared ones, struggled to comprehend:

I used to think that I am on the side of the students than the senior lecturers. I am turning 38 next week and I am quickly realising that I belong to the old school. I can feel the intergenerational gap. It's starting to make me uncomfortable too because I also think that my knowledge is no longer relevant to students or they don't find my knowledge interesting anymore.

The third concern was the low-quality standards in the department. The data showed that four of the lecturers were dissatisfied with the overall quality of the sociology major degree that they were providing. While there were barriers hindering lecturers implementation of the curriculum and pedagogy, the quality standards were generally low in terms of content, the awarding of grades and exam questions:

> *Our curriculum expectations and student expectations are so low. Maybe I have higher expectations. It's difficult to have higher expectations if the rest of the university doesn't share them. I feel frustrated that students fail to debate on current issues for instance, xenophobia and the 'Rhodes Must Fall' debates. In my module, I try to initiate these engagements but the students will just look at me. Even in small groups, for instance, in the Afrikaans class the students don't speak, they don't engage, they don't debate. They lack knowledge yet we award them pass marks when sometimes they do not deserve them. It is unfortunate that some of the exams offered in the department are of low standards.* (Vaal)

Rose agreed that their quality was low to such an extent that she was not confident about hiring their own graduates:

> *I recently advertised for a morning only position. I received 182 responses and three quarters of the applicants held either Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Social Sciences degrees. They were our graduates and I won't give them a job because they will not think and reason the way we want. It's scary, but that's how it is.*

Another lecturer highlighted they have never carried any out a study to determine the quality of the degree that they provide. Instead, the only indicator of the quality was the throughput rate:

> *The only objective criterion which we can use to measure is our assessments. Our throughput rate is an indication of whether students are achieving what they are supposed to achieve.* (Noma)

This section highlighted that the constraints were nationally and institutionally systematic. The students' attitudes coupled with low-quality demands seemed to hinder the productivity of the learning process.

The next section pulls together what we can learn from the data in terms of opportunities, capabilities, functioning, agency and conversion factors.

5.9 Opportunities, capabilities and functionings that matter

The chapter has so far captured the processes of curriculum design at EU using lecturers' voices. The overarching point was the agreement among lecturers on the lack of a unifying framework that justified and directed the curriculum. There was a high level of autonomy in terms of curriculum design. Although important, it also shows a lack of coherence especially given that most of the staff members were lecturers and junior lecturers. While participants highlighted the lack of a clear direction on curriculum design, there is little evidence illustrating enthusiasm to initiate such discussions.

Lecturers largely concurred that functionings important for sociologists included critical thinking, having multiple perspectives, analytical ability and ability to conduct research. With the exception of critical thinking and having multiple perspectives which were developed through sociological theories, there is less evidence showing commitment to knowledge aimed at developing graduate functionings. The nurturing of student capabilities and functionings to live and act in the world was unintended and rather ad hoc.

Table 5.9: Capabilities dimensions extrapolated from interviews with the EU lecturers

Capability	Clear examples drawn from the chapter and who listed the capability
i) Critical thinking	*We teach them to apply the Marxist perspective to question the hidden things, not taking anything at face value. They should try to understand the mechanisms of society, voicing discontent; for example, corruption, race etc.* (Vaal)
ii) Sociological knowledge/imagination	*Listed by all lecturers.*
iii) Multiple perspectives	*(commenting on the Marikana case study) The students were able to analyse, work together, and relate to the problems of the workers. They appreciated that the workers did not just get up one morning planning to strike. There were certain conditions that led to the tragedy. So after such engagement and discussions, students must be in a position to look at the tragedy from different standpoints to critically analyse, and understand other people from their own perspective.* (Will)
iv) Conducting research	*Listed by all lecturers*
v) Global citizenship	*My instinct is that the humanities should prepare students for life* (Rose) *Listed by Vaal and Rose only*
vi)Employment opportunities	*I recently advertised for a morning only position. I received 182 responses and three quarters of the applicants held either Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Social Sciences degrees. They were our graduates and I won't give them a job because they will not think and reason the way we want. It's scary, but that's how it is.* (Rose)
vii)Empathy	*We also teach people that their reality is not someone else's reality, taking into consideration that certain structures lead to other realities.* (Vaal)

The data showed that knowledge is transmitted in various ways but mainly through lectures. The lectures seemed more technical in their delivery to students who were treated as a homogeneous group. Although delivery of content through online platforms such as the blackboard were convenient, lecturers noted that these resulted in students not reading widely.The lecturers regarded the student evaluation exercise as one way of ensuring their participation in curriculum design.

Other issues that influenced curriculum design were the quality of students in the DoS. Most lecturers' perceived the students in the faculty as 'weak' and ill-informed about the programme. This had implications on how the students viewed the subject, their participation in class, development of functionings and future career decisions. In the next Chapter, I examine how curriculum knowledge acquired by EU students enhanced or constrained their capabilities to live and act in the world. I also assess the functionings (and hence capabilities) students valued as a result of studying for sociology degree.

Chapter 6: Equality University student perspectives

> "Moreover, undemocratic structures in the compulsory school and the exclusion of an influential voice on the part of children and young people are undermining confidence in democratic processes and work forms". (Roth 2003: 396)

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored lecturer perspectives on the development of the sociology curriculum at EU. One of the main findings highlighted by EU lecturers was that the majority of students enrolled in the Bachelor of Social Sciences degree had low admission scores and took sociology by default, rather than by choice. The lack of a clear philosophy or objectives to guide the development and implementation of a coherent curriculum narrative was also observed. It was apparent that the development of student functionings took place in ad hoc fashion with less evidence to intentionally enhance students' capabilities and functionings to live and act in the world. Lecturers also highlighted that, in their view, higher education has compromised pedagogy as they could not effectively engage with the students when content was delivered. It was also clear that the student evaluation forms constituted the only way in which students' feedback was collected.

This chapter answers the following questions: In what ways does curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students enhance or constrain their capabilities to live and act in the world? What functionings (and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree? The aim is to determine ways in which curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contribute to the enhancement of capabilities to live and act in the world. The chapter further looks at what functionings (as a proxy for capabilities) students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree (the same applies to Chapter 8: IU student perspectives). Students' perspectives and insights provided data that is vital in understanding the development of sociology curricula at South African universities and beyond (see Appendix 1 for the student interview schedule).

The next section presents the students' perceptions and experiences of the above. The key codes that emerged from the analysis of the data have been used to discuss students' perspectives, namely: access to university, student experiences and valued functionings, employability, student involvement, and pedagogical relationships.

6.2 Access and success at university and in degree programmes

Two key issues that emerged from the data are that: the majority of students enrol for the Bachelor of Social Science by default; and there is limited support and guidance when selecting a university and degree, particularly for first-generation students.

Despite her poor results, Memory was motivated to gain a higher education qualification against all odds. Her journey to university came about through the desire and commitment to get into university, although she was not clear about which degree programme to pursue. When Memory failed to secure a place to study at EU on her first attempt, she enrolled at a Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution to study electrical engineering. She struggled to succeed in this course and realised that she would not be able to graduate. Memory's choice of university and degree showed a lack of information about the variety of programmes to choose from, partly due to parental background and her lack of social capital[44]. Sociology was neither her first choice nor did she receive any information about choosing a field of study or a preferred profession from her parents. She was the first in her family to go to university and she regarded herself as pioneering in this regard. However, she dropped out of the engineering course, just like many other first-generation students. Nevertheless, the fact that Memory independently sought a point of entry to higher education and persisted in her attempts to access higher education reveals her autonomy and proactive approach to challenging circumstances. She also demonstrated that she had the ability to bounce back in enrolling for the extended programme:

> *I came to this city accidentally with a desire to search for greener pastures. I came here in 2009 and I started by searching for a place to study at a university but I failed to secure a place. I ended up studying electrical engineering at an FET before I dropped out. In fact my marks did not meet the minimum requirements to enrol in the main degree programme. So I eventually enrolled for the bridging programme where I spent one year before enrolling for the Bachelor of Social Science degree programme. I attained between 19 and 23 admission points.* (Memory)

Access to university in South Africa and choice of a degree programme is largely influenced by a student's matriculation grades, with minimum entry scores varying from university to university. In most cases students with low matriculation grades end up in the FoH which accepts students with relatively low marks (see Chapter 5: Section 5.2).

[44] Networks together with shared norms, values and understandings that facilitate co-operation within or among groups (Bourdieu 1986).

A common reported experience was that students did not receive enough support and guidance from their families in selecting their degree and university. The majority of the students reported having enrolled for the Bachelor of Social Science degree programme with the intention of pursuing professional fields such as social work or psychology (issues of employment were dominant in the interviews and are discussed in Section 6.3). Students regarded these two fields as pathways to getting high income jobs. Memory also highlighted that students possessed insufficient information on what was required in becoming a social worker. However, she changed her mind during the course of her studies because she attained better marks in sociology than in psychology and she later found sociology interesting as evinced through the following:

> *I didn't have time for psychology as I paid more attention to sociology. I also found sociology interesting back then. Our academic advisor did not give us enough information because I thought that by doing sociology (honours) I would become a social worker and that is wrong. Honours level is about doing research, theory and other stuff. There is nothing that is linked to being social worker. I didn't take it lightly (the misinformation) back then but I am okay with it now. I got to know the truth in my third year. I got the wrong information through rumours, for example, someone would say I am coming from the programme director and he said if you have honours degree you will become a social worker [……..]. Nobody realised that there is a core module that they take that we did not have. When I enquired from the Department of social work I was told that to be a social worker it was mandatory to take the compulsory module for the three consecutive years.*

Judy emphasised that she had settled for sociology because she thought the degree programme was similar to that of social work:

> *I did not go for the Bachelor of Social Science degree in particular. I wanted to study social work but I was not selected for that degree programme. I took Bachelor of Social Science degree because I thought it was similar to social work. Social work involves changing people's lives, which is my passion, especially. I believe that this kind of work will enable me to reach out and make a difference in the community. I also got into sociology because I liked the first lecture.*

Precious also commented:

> *Most students are attracted to the Bachelor of Social Science degree because of psychology track. If psychology was not one of the majors, I would have never known sociology.*

First-generation students' parents worry about their children leaving home. Emma's parents were not willing to have their child live far from home because relocation comes with extra

expenses and security anxieties. Despite the fact that her parents had little knowledge of college demands, they exerted a positive influence in the decision making process in selecting a university. Since most of the parents had not been to university, they may not have understood the various degrees on offer and hence were not in a position to offer meaningful guidance on degree selection:

> *I enrolled at this university because my mother didn't want me to leave town but at the same time she didn't give me enough information on degree programmes. For me it was more of a dislike of things. I did not like to pursue anthropology and I did not also like criminology. Sociology and communication were the options available but I went with sociology because I passed with good grades (during first year). My grades in psychology were not that good but I could have taken criminology if I wanted.* (Emma)

Precious was a first-generation student who came from a middle class family[45] and she was clear about what she wanted. She highlighted that she knew where she wanted to live and study but her decision was overridden by her father's wishes. Her father dictated to her on which university she would attend as well as the degree programme she would follow. The question of university selection is pragmatic in the sense that the university that one chooses must offer the field one is interested in and parents also consider the cost of living away from home. In light of this, Precious obeyed her father as the person who was responsible for her tuition, only to change the degree programme once she had settled at EU. Precious also wanted to pursue psychology but realised that she was not going to be happy, hence opting for sociology:

> *I am here because my daddy decided that I must live and study in this city. He regarded this city as a safe, well developed and, a good environment for student learning. It's small and kind of a laid back town. My first choice was University of Cape Town (UCT) but EU is the only university that offered me a place during mid-year. I preferred UCT, which is located at the coast, because I have chronic migraines and intended to avoid places with hot weather like here. I first registered in Human Resources department for a year because that is what my daddy wanted me to study. For me to study psychology, it meant that I had to enrol for the Bachelor of Social Science degree programme. They were 3 majors and I intended to pursue the psychology track. I wanted to understand more about my condition of migraines. But realised that I am not a fan for hospitals and I studied psychology first year and second year and I found that I would not be happy working as a psychologist and I switched to sociology and criminology just like that.*

According to Banks-Santilli (2014) and Reay et al. (2005), first-generation students tend to limit their choices even when they qualify for admission to higher-ranking universities, with

[45] Her father was a commercial farmer.

Engle (2007) pointing out that they often apply to only one institution. This is primarily due to a combination of factors including lack of information about degree programmes and insufficient funds for multiple application fees (Banks-Santilli 2014). Parents' decisions limit students' agency freedom in such situations. As a result they are not free to make their own choices about the universities they wish to attend. Choosing a university based on proximity only reflects a narrow perception of the factors involved in that a myriad of additional factors should be taken into consideration, for example, the academic reputation of a given university or department, the content of the courses on offer, teaching methods as well as the success profile of its graduates. Though guiding and coercing students into certain fields might lead them to successful careers, students ought to be offered the freedom to act on things that they value.

Overall, students highlighted that they did not have adequate information to help them choose a major:

> *Students should consult and see whether the degree programme they choose is really what they want. One should have reasons why they want to study sociology. Some people think sociology is an easy access option but I don't agree with that because it is difficult in its own way. For those with low points, I think it is best to enrol for a bridging course and choose more carefully.* (Precious)

A divergent view on the choice of field was offered by Lisa who eventually chose sociology because it matched her interest. Lisa attained high matriculation grades which opened up many alternatives and opportunities for her. However, she seemed indecisive at first, intending to enrol in science subjects which could arguably have given her a professional career. Despite her high matriculation grades Lisa chose sociology ahead of all other fields. This suggests that she selected a course that suited her desire, commitment and passion. Of all the six students interviewed, Lisa is the only one who applied to more than one university because she could afford the application fees:

> *I applied for Bachelor Science in Genetics at another university*[46] *but I couldn't get a place there because the entry score for Indian students was higher. I was accepted at EU but I wasn't certain about what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to deal with people but I didn't know where I would like to go so I took Bachelor of Social Sciences because it accommodates my passion so well. So I majored in sociology and criminology and I am doing my honours degree in sociology.* (Lisa)

[46] Name withheld to preserve anonymity.

All the participants reported not knowing what sociology involved when they first came to university. The students emphasised that they needed to justify why they enrolled for the course they chose. The majority were not in a position to do that.

> *Students should know why they want to enrol for the programme. They should do more research and maybe attend open days. Studying for a Bachelor of Social Science degree is like you are reading for your matric. You can't specialise in the first three years and one has to take a field of interest at honours degree level. As students we must know that we need to continue with our studies to master's degree level at least or else you just work anywhere.* (Memory)

The excerpt above suggests that students did not attend open days to obtain information on the various degree programmes. Prospective students face many challenges in accessing information, for example, many do not know about open days, they obtain very little or no information at high school, and cannot afford the transport costs of getting to such events. However, the students also realised the importance of open days in that they allow prospective students to access information on courses offered, how these are taught, and to gauge whether the university and hence its departments meet their expectations. During open days prospective students are afforded a chance to interact with current students who can share their learning experiences. The students highlighted that on such days they also get the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on things that are important to them.

> *It's better to be certain before you jump into anything. I enrolled for the Bachelor of Social Science degree because this was one option that was available to me and I didn't like the other options. My concern was about career options available after graduation. I am in my honours year and the question is still there because this degree does not have a specific career, for example, to say you are a medical doctor or a social worker. To become someone, it has to come from within you, to push to become relevant. You can be a researcher, you can go anywhere but it is up to you as an individual.* (Emma)

In sum, the majority of students ended up in the FoH by default for various reasons; the main ones being low matriculation grades, lack of support and guidance in choosing a degree and university. This implies that students' freedom to select a degree programme was limited at enrolment and some of the students ended up taking the sociology major they did not really appreciate. All this has implications for students' learning experiences and perceptions of curriculum and pedagogy design and implementation.

6.3 Student experiences and valued functionings

Five interrelated issues emerged, namely:

i) Students identified functionings they acquired through the sociology curriculum, the prominent ones being critical thinking and the adoption of multiple perspectives,

ii) Students valued new knowledge,

iii) They were courses that they valued that they did not get,

iv) Students valued theories, and lastly

v) Course content challenged them to act independently.

Students firstly identified the valued functionings they acquired as a result of studying sociology. The functionings (achieved capabilities) included acting independently, being critical, problem solving, public speaking, empathy, and the ability to write:

> *Yes I think I attained these skills. Like now I have an assignment that I am working on and I am not scared to do it alone. I know I can go and read, find information and I can work by myself. I can deconstruct the information and write a good paper. I can even send emails to my lecturers asking things, verifying issues that I am not sure about. I am now able to think through the work more clearly.* (Lisa)

Although the students were able to identify several functionings, the most common amongst these were critical thinking and the skill of adopting multiple perspectives:

> *I am a more critical than I was before. Previously I would naturally uptake whatever I was told or whatever was available. I remember I used to call my mom a monster, meaning that she dictated everything at home but I got to a point where everything is based on conversation, conversation based on reason more than culture and traditional beliefs. I have become more open minded and confident.* (Emma)

The fact that students could justify what they did (actions) by citing reasons for their actions suggests that they were being changed by knowledge. The study of sociology caused students to see society differently. Five students highlighted that they felt they had become enlightened and were now more critical of society and of knowledge itself. Prior to studying sociology the students pointed out that they had been judgemental and did not understand the reasons behind certain social phenomena. They used to accept things at face value (without questioning critically). It was also reported that the study of sociology assisted students to understand how some people became poor, why they could not do things for themselves, and why they continued to be exploited, for example, at work. Lisa pointed out that she also became empathetic as a result of studying sociology. Student perceptions such as these are illustrated by excerpts such as the following:

I definitely see society in a different way because prior to that I was just worried about myself, and my family. I wasn't interested in knowing what my neighbours or the community were going through. I wasn't interested in their lives how they were affected by lack of service delivery etc. Now I don't only think about my parents, but others who live in the community, those who can't afford to drive out to buy water, I reflect on how that (shortage of water) affect them? I try to imagine what they are going through. If I didn't study sociology I wouldn't care about other people who do not have water. But now I understand that we need each other as much as we can. I am more understanding of other people's circumstances than before. (Lisa)

Precious commented:

Now I question everything before I act and I make conscious decisions before I engage. It's a choice; it is no longer acting according to the whims of society. We do things without knowing why we do them and sociology opened my eyes. Whether it is my studies or relationships at home, I am not forced to do anything. From birth we are blindfolded but sociology removed that. For example if we look at parenting, it's a choice to become a mother. Some people end up starting families when they are not prepared. At times it's not by choice. People have to pursue their dreams.

Memory added:

I used to be judgemental, now I can reason about certain things. In the past I couldn't reason, for example, things like water scarcity and how it affects people in the community, I couldn't reason for things like the growth of population and its effects, the concept of ageing, and things like how people construct reality according to their circumstances.

Judy reported being able to analyse family challenges and offer possible solutions through the sociological perspectives she had gained. She cited an example in which she tried to explain her uncle's behaviour, how it was learned and shaped by society and the individuals close to him:

My mom called me this other day and she said that her little brother Jabu doesn't have respect for her and her other siblings. I told to her look at Jabu in a context that he was raised. I challenged her to reflect back to the time when they were growing up. Jabu is the youngest in a family of four and they lost their parents when he was a teenager. My mom played a parental role to Jabu. My mother's sister is more open and used to drink with Jabu. This being the case, Jabu was looked after by his siblings, they are the ones who raised him to be what he is today. Unfortunately, Jabu received conflicting guidance from the three of them, for instance, my mom is strict whilst the older sister is liberal and would drink alcohol with him during his teens. Jabu's brother was never there for him. So Jabu is a product of their parenting, so in a way they all contributed to the outlook of who he is. He is always out of jobs; he does not have the patience to stick to one job. So sociology calls us to look beyond the obvious and requires us to critically look at situations.

Secondly, the students valued the new knowledge that they had acquired:

> *It was broad and sociology majors were prescribed in third year, but we had a choice in the first and second years. Through the exposure to different courses, I discovered sociology and I am grateful for that.* (Precious)

As pointed out by Precious, students perceived that the introductory courses on offer afforded them the chance to learn new things:

> *I must also mention that during the first year, I liked the 'Introduction to Sociology' module. It got us to see how we are taken advantage of by big nations, and how everything is forced up upon us through globalisation. It introduced this new sociological perspective that most of us did not have. As a result, we are now able to view the world in a different way, a lot of things that we do have been prescribed. I got to see that one must not be a victim of system…for example how a woman should behave in public is dictated. The degree made me realise that we have choice and that the power is in our hands. I got to know that I can be independent. I learned social relations and being able to learn from other people without being selfish. That changed my life. I now know that not everything is helpful in life.*

Three functionings that can be extrapolated from the above are that: i) Students possessed multiple perspectives; ii) They valued critical thinking and the concept of acting on things that they valued (agency); and iii) Since the curriculum was broad, students had the freedom to choose modules that were important to them from the fields of psychology, criminology and sociology. Some of the sociology modules that students chose included the 'Sociology of Population', 'Sociological Theory' and 'Sociology of the Family':

> *We have the opportunity to choose modules from criminology in the second year and in the third year we could choose 'Research' or 'Juvenile criminology'. In the second year, we did (sociology of) development and we were introduced to society and the concept of development in Africa. That was crucial to me because if I didn't do that course I wouldn't have been interested in sociology. In our second year I enjoyed 'Environmental Sociology' as it looks at the effects of globalisation.* (Lisa)

There were, however, mixed reactions as some of the students were doubtful about whether these functionings had been attained by their peers during the undergraduate period:

> *We can't generalise the attainment of these skills, only those who were determined and wanted to pass benefitted. I have a feeling that the other guys just crammed and reproduced stuff for the sake of passing, which is unfortunate. With us, the guys who are in the honours class now, the difference and the quality of people is obviously evident.* (Lisa)

Thirdly, even though the curriculum offered broad choice, students highlighted that there were electives they wished had been included in the curriculum, for example, 'Introduction to Law' as indicated by Precious:

> *However I would have liked to take electives from the law department but they did not allow us that because it was not part of the curriculum. When I commenced the Bachelor of Social Sciences programme I wanted to move to Bachelor of Arts but I was convinced that whatever I wanted to do in Bachelor of Arts was also doable in the programme. I knew what I wanted but I was misinformed. I didn't like the fact that I didn't have an option to take law modules. The electives were limited. I like law and wanted to pursue law at some point.*

Although Memory's point seemed distant from the others, she highlighted that the new modules seemed to satisfy lecturers' interests more than those of the students:

> *I think it would be better for them to introduce unique modules for instance something on human rights and security. These are relevant in South Africa but the new modules that have been introduced are more about what they (lecturers) want than what students want.*

Some students perceived the Bachelor of Social Sciences curriculum as introductory in nature:

> *At first year it was just the 'Introduction to Sociology', founders of sociology, a little bit of social structures, family, and population. It was more of introductions and the second year you do more of what you did in first year. If you want to major in sociology you have to take certain modules. I did 'Environmental Sociology' and 'Development Sociology'. The problem is that you cannot really master anything in-depth.* (Memory)

The fourth point, which relates to the value of new knowledge, was that sociology students emerged as scholars who value theories. All the students highlighted that sociological theories such as functionalism or structuralism helped them understand and explain human behaviour patterns. The students gained a better understanding of some social phenomena such as suicide, as theorised by Emile Durkheim. Durkheim's work, they said, also illustrated the importance of theory, and that in the absence of theories people would struggle to explain the relationship between concepts, as well as cause and effect relationships in social life. Emma's observation captured this as follows:

> *I found 'Social Theory' to be quite interesting because it lays the foundation to explain societal behaviour. The different paradigms which include functionalism, structuralism or phenomenology were interesting because one can use them to analyse life situations anywhere in the world. It's up to individuals to choose which paradigm to apply to a*

particular situation. Theories are useful in finding out how the society works, for example, Karl Marx explains the capitalist society, and it has become so relevant in the society that we live in today.

The following excerpt illustrates Judy's support of this view:

Sociology helped me understand and explain why some things happen in a particular way. (After attending sociology lessons) I could understand why people commit suicide, for example, Durkheim's sociological perspective explains that maybe they were rejected by society or isolated and in psychology you learn that maybe it's a disorder.

Although students find theories and other content relevant and important in explaining social life, it was also highlighted that students faced challenges in understanding and articulating these theoretical paradigms. The challenges mentioned are related to sociological 'jargon' and the use of abstract concepts. As Lisa commented:

In third year we did a lot of theory and a lot of research. I didn't enjoy it. Research was much better than theory because theory was more like history. We didn't learn because we didn't understand it, they taught abstract things, and there was no way to avoid it. (Lisa)

While English[47] is her first language, Lisa pointed out that she even struggled to comprehend certain concepts. Lisa argued that most students struggled with the ability to write or speak proper English:

My colleagues struggle to write clearly and it is understandable because English is not their first language. The lecturer who teaches 'Social Theory' uses large words, especially at second and third year level. I used to go back to him and say that I don't understand the big words; I don't understand what is going on. I had to keep on reading until I understood, and that was time consuming. At that level, we, students, haven't developed the ability to understand the jargon. English is my first language but I still battle with it.

Precious thought the theories were boring:

First year was boring because of theories (Introduction of theories), and lecturers seemed to be disinterested in their own modules. They just threw concepts, for example, capitalism, symbolism, feminism, whilst they did not enthuse their students?

Lastly, students expressed conflicting perceptions when asked if studying sociology equipped them with the ability to act independently and make their own choices. Three students,

[47] English is the official medium of instruction from grade 4 but teachers often use mother tongue languages such as Zulu, Pedi etc.

namely Precious, Judy, and Lisa were confident and felt more confident that they could work independently as a result of their sociological studies:

> *I think the education that we received enabled us to act independently and question things. I observed it in my honours class that the foundational knowledge that I got during my first three years (undergraduate) is helpful. I am not afraid to ask my lecturers why some things are the way they are. If I don't understand the logic behind the explanation I can even challenge it, and I am now able to have academic discussion without being offended. I believe that in the first three years they gave us the tools to know how to tackle and pose questions.* (Lisa)

Memory differed, arguing that they acquired the ability to act independently and to make their own choices and solve problems with skills they had acquired from their particular backgrounds. Memory pointed out that she derived these skills from her strong rural[48] background and upbringing. In addition, she felt pressure to look after her family:

> *Sociology did not make me to act independently. It doesn't because it's not practical. It's theoretical, and we just do things according to the book but we do not apply them in our everyday lives. It's very rare…and besides, I don't like to rely on other people. I want to do things on my own since my childhood. I guess I got this because I am a first born, so that means I have to take care of my siblings. I can face any challenge. I have been finding my way on most things. I also have to do this because my parents are poor and I experienced that rural life that toughens.*

Memory's initial move to the university in a 'big city' can be perceived to support the argument that her resilience and independence were not derived from her knowledge of sociology:

> *I came to this city on the invitation of my friend and when I arrived I couldn't get through to her (cell phone). In fact, she didn't pick up her phone. It was my first time coming to a big city with lots of people, robots [traffic lights] and cars but I managed to protect myself from all the bad things that could have happened to me. I befriended a certain girl who took care of me until I found a place of my own. So you can see that it (resilience) comes from far.*

The acquisition of skills was also linked to courses in other departments and their high school learning experiences:

> *To be honest I don't think I got all of this in sociology. I think it was developed in psychology. 'Developmental Psychology', 'Abnormal Psychology' and 'Social Psychology' opened my eyes. Sociology modules built confidence in me.* (Judy)

[48] 'Rural' is also regarded as townships and the schools they attended are known as township schools.

Precious expressed a strong appreciation for gender equity and equality. She demonstrated that equality is multi-faceted and that it included having equal opportunities and partaking in an equitable distribution of resources. She did this by standing up for what she believed hence her return to school instead of opting for an early marriage:

> *Because of studying sociology I defied society by choosing not to go home and become a wife as many women are pressured to do. I chose to pursue a second degree and my dreams which I believe will make me a better wife, mother one day and person. I think a happy person has the potential to become a happy companion.*

In conclusion, the interviews revealed that students acquired functionings that their lecturers had indicated when they were interviewed. It emerged strongly from the interviews that the three common functionings that both students and lecturers valued were: critical thinking, having multiple perspectives and the notion of acting on things that they valued. Although most students enrolled for the programme by default, they ultimately came to value what they had learned in their sociology courses. However, the data suggests that there were electives that they wished had formed part of the curriculum. This indicates that there is limited student involvement in curriculum design. This implies that there was limited freedom for students to deliberate on and participate in the design of the curriculum, meaning that the concepts valued by students were not included. However, there is evidence to support the fact that course content challenged students to act independently.

6.3.1 Employment opportunities

The main finding in this section is that all students expressed valuing the importance of being prepared for the world of work and were worried about their future armed only with a sociology qualification.

One of the challenges of students who had majored in sociology is that they find it difficult to align themselves with a profession. They pointed out that, unlike social workers, nurses or psychologists, a sociologist's career path was vague. This concern was expressed by Lisa:

> *Of course students need to be prepared for the world of work. I used to think that it was the duty of an individual to find a job alone. As I seek employment it's not only about me but also the qualification. I battle to find a job even with a post grad degree now. The staff members just tell you that there are so many opportunities out there, yet upon searching for jobs I get advertisements saying that they need a social worker or a psychologist. We should be told about the limitations of these degrees and we also need to know how we can use them to get jobs. Most of the time, we as students, look up to university staff (as source of information) but we are somehow duped into taking courses. We are also to blame*

because we don't enquire further. If we had done our homework, we could have obtained statistics regarding the careers we wished to follow and we could have known what type of degrees we could apply for. Unlike a doctor or a teacher, when a sociology graduate searches for a job online or in the paper it's not labelled as 'sociologist' required.

The data suggests the difficulty of finding a well-paying job with only a sociology qualification. Lisa pointed out that it was unusual for employers to seek out sociologists in particular, which leaves the students in a dilemma. Another student, Precious, commented:

It is high time students aspire about the future and world of work when enrolling at universities. If we take for instance someone with 'Industrial Sociology', he can be outshone by someone who has studied 'Industrial psychology' or 'Human resources'. So one lags behind in that regard and can hardly compete on the market.

The students compared their sociology degree qualification to a matriculation certificate. The implication here is that sociology graduates can become anything or nothing, meaning that their career is not strongly determined by the degree obtained. They highlighted that with a sociology degree the crux lies with how the individual uses the degree as opposed to the degree leading them into a clear career path. The data furthermore suggests that students enrol for honours degrees to strengthen their employment competitiveness:

The myth that goes around is that when you are studying Bachelor of Social Science degree you are as good as being a Matric graduate because upon graduating there is nothing that you can do. With this degree, one might be lucky to get a good job (more income) or it can be a struggle. The thing is that it is not the degree that determines your career bout how you use it. That's one of the things that pushed me to do honours. At least with an honours degree, it's better than a general degree. This comes with certainty of knowing what you want to do with the degree. Since the time that I came here, their curriculum has not been designed for a particular career. They need to think about that more seriously. (Emma)

The data seemed to suggest that sociologists are not in demand and that the students are unenthusiastic about the prospect of working as sociologists. This aspect concerns the limited employability of sociology degree graduates which is linked to demand forces in the employment market. Although the students highlighted how they had drawn benefit from studying sociology, they noted that the twenty-first century is more challenging in terms of getting employment, hence the need to revisit the sociology curriculum for alignment with present employment dictates. All students interviewed expressed the desire to be employed after graduating and suggested an event like a 'career expo' at high school level where students are advised on the variety of careers before they enter higher education. This would

be possible in an ideal scenario, but it is quite unlikely for the majority of young people from impoverished backgrounds.

These employment concerns speak directly to aspirations and the things that students most strongly value in their lives. Education, family, happiness and career options were found to be at the top of this list of things to value. The view expressed by Memory confirmed this:

> *Education is important in my life. I think about my family, aspects of my life, me being happy, and I also think about the future in terms of career. At one point I will need to look back and support my family (financially).*

Students regard education as a tool with which to help look after the family. This makes economic sense since most students came from poor backgrounds and want to offer financial assistance to their families in future. If we assume that upon enrolment for a degree the student anticipates arriving at a stronger position to help their family economically, then it is surprising that some students expressed having no expectations when enrolling for a degree programme. Upon reflection, this emerges as a logical conclusion when we consider that most students ended up studying sociology by default, as pointed out by Emma:

> *I had an open mind; I have learned that it's better not to create expectations. If you do and things don't work out the way you expected them, you are bound to live in shame. But then I had an open mind to explore, to see different things, and to become somebody with a career. So I wanted to have a good foundation for a career.*

Judy also commented:

> *The first time it was more of exploring more than anything else. As time goes by there were the expectations to see things in different ways, and to get employed at some point.*

As previously stated, Lisa was the exception since she reported having followed her passion in enrolling for the sociology major, adding that sociology met her expectations (that is expectations associated less with employment and more with personal interest):

> *I learned about helping poor people, understanding inequality and problems associated with the high unemployment rate in South Africa. Sociology made me understand the challenges and how we can deal with them.*

As with lecturers, employment is highly valued and students expressed concern that the current curriculum does not prepare them for the world of work. The data suggests that little is being done to address their employment concerns. An employment capability is advanced

in both the capabilities approach and the human capital approach. However, the emphasis tends to fall more strongly on human capital (education for economic gain) than on the capabilities where the emphasis is on each student's functioning and the underlying opportunities or capabilities to choose. This reality strengthens the need to consider bringing the two together.

6.4 Student involvement

Since lecturers indicated that they relied on the student evaluation forms to garner students' input with respect to curriculum design, students were also asked to comment on this aspect. The majority of the students indicated that they did not take the evaluation (of modules) exercise seriously. They pointed out that this was especially true during the first year, but reported taking the forms more seriously as they progressed to second and third year level. This is corroborated by Memory:

> *I don't take the evaluation exercise seriously because I didn't understand the importance of the exercise. When I carried out my research that's when I understood why they conducted the exercise. My understanding is that the exercise was done to get the students' views on teaching approaches, on where they can improve, and on the aspects or complaints that we might have on our learning experience. But I didn't even complete evaluation forms for certain courses.*

However, there were exceptions. As an example, Lisa and Precious highlighted that they conscientiously completed the evaluation forms from the first year onwards:

> *I always complete them honestly, and even if I have negative comments I make them so that lectures can improve on those aspects. I think the lecturers listened and addressed some of the issues, for example, in our first year we never got notes on Blackboard and we complained. By third year the notes were always available before class.* (Lisa)

Precious also reported taking the exercise seriously:

> *I took the student evaluation exercise extremely seriously because it provided me with the opportunity to write my views on my learning experiences, but my concern is whether lecturers take the exercise seriously because the same mistakes are repeated or some of the suggestions are not implemented.*

Apart from the student evaluation exercise, which many students did not take seriously, there was no other platform for students to participate in curriculum design or in the modules constituting the curriculum. This implies that the feedback compiled by lecturers might not have been a true reflection of what students valued. Although students completed these

forms, the majority were sceptical about the take-up and implementation of their recommendations. As a result they regarded the exercise as a waste of time.

6.5 Pedagogical relationships

The main points that emerged from this section are that:

i) There were conflicting perceptions about the use of PowerPoint and the concept of 'banking' education,

ii) Students reported valuing the academic support received,

iii) Students valued good relationships with teachers, and

iv) Students valued being recognised and appreciated.

In response to the question, 'What kinds of teaching approaches did you like most?' the majority of the students noted that all lecturers used PowerPoint presentations to deliver content. Some of these PowerPoint slides, notes and materials were posted on Blackboard. However, the use of generalised slides where lecturers reproduced the content found in textbooks was frowned upon. Students preferred the use of 'personalised' PowerPoint presentations:

> *Students appreciate lecturers who do not reproduce textbooks. I liked lecturers who paraphrased and explained things clearly, yet maintaining the importance of content within their work. Although one lecturer was handsome, I did not like his way of teaching because he would read everything without adding anything. We could do that on our own. We appreciated someone who comes to class prepared and only refers to the slides to support what he is teaching. On top of that, he didn't give us slides and it is difficult to listen and take down notes simultaneously. In fact, I didn't understand why we were leaning what we were learning, they don't give relevance to their subject.* (Precious)

Lisa's observation below indicated that students valued working independently and communicating with lecturers online:

> *In the first three years, we just had lectures, and it was mostly PowerPoint presentations. Rarely did we have activities such as group work or things like that within class. […..] It was only assignments in groups or working in groups ahead of class. But I like working independently. I did not like the idea of conducting research in a group because sometimes it's very hard to work around other people's schedules. What I also liked is that I could communicate with lecturers directly even after hours. For example, if you had a problem, I could ask the lecturer and get a response within 24 hours. I like the use of technology and how it can be utilised in education.*

Students' responses were not surprising given the large numbers in undergraduate classes. However, students valued the discussions and debates of some of the sensitive topics

although they reported not always comprehending them. The few discussions that took place in class enabled students to hear different perspectives on the subject under discussion, as noted by Precious:

> *We enjoyed discussions, especially in second year (with one of the lecturers). We discussed everything that we were learning, for example, relationships of gays, and they (gays) felt free to contribute to the discussions. Everything was related to real life experiences. It created a better understanding, we could ask questions and we could interact freely without pointing fingers.*

Students valued academic support, regardless of their background and reported drawing benefit from the tutorial programme. They noted that they consulted tutors[49] for explanations of concepts that they felt they had not grasped in class. The young age of the tutors helped bridge the generational gap between student and lecturers. Lisa also pointed out that tutors were useful to some students:

> *We only had tutors in the first year and for me it was very helpful because we could ask tutors things we didn't understand in class. I didn't feel stressed because I had access to a tutor who was young. Generally, the tutors were able to use examples that our lecturers wouldn't use and that was very helpful. I wish we had access to tutors in our second year because I felt there were things that I didn't understand.*

Lisa further pointed out that she suspected that a lot of people did not consult the tutors because they thought it was a mere waste of time:

> *A lot of people that I know of didn't want to attend tutor sessions because they thought it was a waste of time, but I liked them because I used to write my questions down (in lectures) then afterwards I consulted a tutor.*

Four students expressed concern about 'banking' education and being 'spoon-fed'. The students indicated that the lecturers came and off-loaded information on to them, which in turn was received and memorised merely for the sake of passing the examination. When the students moved to honours class, they reported feeling as if they were thrown into the deep end and were expected to swim or drown. All the students indicated that they were struggling to cope at honours level. They alleged that they were often given reading materials, the learning outcomes and the assignment. The students were expected to make their own notes and the learning sessions at this level were more interactive. This reinforces critical thinking and knowledge ownership. Precious provided an insight into this issue with her comment:

[49] Tutors were honours and master's degree students in the Faculty of Humanities.

During the first year, it seems there is no passion in whatever one is studying and the lecturers are not also connected. I felt like they were just passing on information that they did not care about. There was no meaning in everything, and the sense of belonging in the department was questionable. In second year, one of the young female lecturers who is a good lecturer made us understand the sociological concepts. She was passionate; through her I leant about family structures, and what is happening in society. Thereafter, sociology gave me binoculars to view life. (Precious)

Memory did not think she had learned a lot. She argued that the majority of students were studying to pass as opposed to absorbing the knowledge. She further said that if learning is to be improved, 'banking' education and 'spoon-feeding' should stop:

There are things that can be improved in the undergraduate programme. Undergraduates must not be 'spoon-fed'. I think there should be a fifty-fifty split on the workload. My observation is that at undergraduate level the students always expect and expect. At honours level, one can expect but nothing will be provided hence one has to work. I think if you work hard to get something it stays within you forever but if you are given on a silver plate then it easy to forget. (Memory)

However, Judy highlighted that she did not see any problem with the 'banking system' and being 'spoon-fed'. She argued that the objective of any student is to pass exams:

We memorised what we were given and passed, and that worked quite well for me. We rarely used other sources; that's how we got through undergraduate years. (Judy)

While commenting on the improvement of the curriculum, Judy pointed out that there were advantages and disadvantages of having many lecturers teaching one module. Five lecturers taught one of the modules she was taking and she did not like this situation. For her, teaching is more than just the delivery of content, but a package that includes the instructor having an impact on her through the way in which content is delivered and through the lecturer's enthusiasm for the subject. The fact that lecturers are different and use different approaches to deliver content implies that their impact on students also varies. This is illustrated by Judy as follows:

I didn't like the idea of having five lecturers teaching one module. Even though they had different personalities, it was confusing for me. Anyone who teaches me will have an impact on me, and I relate to the way people teach by looking, listening, and observing how they are connected to what they are delivering. Some people are passionate about what they do and they give their all.

Students reported valuing their relationship with lecturers. Students described lecturers' behaviour using adjectives such as friendly, approachable, compassionate, energetic and superior among others. They reported preferring lecturers who listened to the challenges that they faced in their learning experiences. The students also spoke highly of lecturers who made students feel valued and those who created a positive learning atmosphere for students to freely express their opinions, reporting that it made them feel comfortable to approach the lecturers in class and even in their offices. The key elements of support that were valued by the students were access to their lecturers outside of class hours, as well as more opportunities for feedback, as noted by Emma below:

> *There is this other lecturer who is a very open and friendly person. She does not portray the 'lecturer' image. She is of course respectable and respects us as students. She does not sit behind the desk and to say, 'yes you are a student what do you want, is that all, goodbye'. She personally asks if you are okay, if you are coping with the work, and if you need any help. Even with her heavy workload, she tries to develop personal relationships with students. She never makes you feel that you are performing badly. In fact, she makes you feel that you do matter as an individual. She explains concepts beyond the scope.*

Talking about the same lecturer, Memory echoed similar sentiments to the effect that this lecturer was approachable and helpful. These aspects are particularly important to students, although it is interesting to note that they expressed disgruntlement when the same lecturer changed her teaching approach at honours level as expressed by Memory:

> *During the undergraduate there was a lecturer who was better than the others. She was approachable and liked to help students but now (during honours) she has changed. I don't know why, maybe it's hectic and she has to push us harder than before.*

There were conflicting perspectives about one particular lecturer who I had also interviewed. Two students felt that she was unapproachable and unavailable, while the other three students noted that although she was unpredictable and 'pushy' she remained interesting and they looked forward to attending her classes. Memory highlighted that the lecturer's higher expectations and the knowledge gap between this particular lecturer and the students contributed to the reported disconnect:

> *She knows a lot and she expects the same from us. She forgets that she attained her master's degree overseas where she got exposed to the developed communities where some of the theorists were based. She knows what was happening there during the time theories were formulated and has a better understanding of these theories and she expects us to have the same knowledge. [……]. Besides, my problem with her is that she is not approachable. While she is knowledgeable, her problem is that she cannot say one thing at a time for you to process; she just says things in a haphazard manner. She is also*

unpredictable and can dress you down in front of class. She has never done that to me but did that to a friend whom she told that she was disappointed by the lack of the depth on the research she had conducted in front of class.

Memory further raised the concern that the lecturers failed to transmit their knowledge in simple understandable terms and that such lecturers tend to 'lose' their students. Related to this is the fact that Memory drew a close association between content knowledge and the ability to teach. Her assumption was that if a teacher has strong knowledge content it might be easier for them to deliver content, but it could also be argued that being knowledgeable is not a guarantee of good teaching. Memory's example illustrates that although some teachers possess content knowledge they might not necessarily be good teachers. It can be argued that it can be challenging to deliver content that one is not sufficiently familiar with. As a result, knowledge is transmitted from lecturers to students with little room for knowledge co-production:

I think there is a difference between being knowledgeable and the ability to teach. I think some people are better teachers than others. Some lecturers do not want to discuss or to be corrected. She doesn't want to be criticised and if you become critical about her teaching methods, it's like you are being disrespectful. It's like the lecturers just want us to listen without engaging. (Memory)

Judy was the only one who argued that the same lecturer was interesting and could be both the 'best' or 'worst' lecturer. This was also the same for another lecturer who was labelled the best by some, while others labelled her the worst. Judy asserted:

I love her attitude, sometimes she can be good and sometimes she can be overwhelming. At times I am like… I can't wait to see what she has to say about a particular topic. In one course, she showed that women were mostly oppressed by men. It was interesting because she is passionate about it and it was good for her to teach that course. Sometimes she is good and sometimes she is not. But I honestly like her.

Judy went on to say the following:

Some lecturers had an attitude problem. There are those lecturers who emphasise that they are qualified, and want to show that they know more than students. There was this lecturer and there was this girl who was answering a question …we could tell from the lecturer's facial expression, and her body language that she got it wrong. With such a lecturer, students do not free to open up and ask questions. She was intimidating, so I was like I am not going to answer her questions. We are here to learn and sociology gives you that confidence to stand up and voice your opinion but there are those lecturers who want

to take that away from you. They give harsh comments, and they are too much, but there are other lecturers who will just get you.

All the students highlighted the need for recognition and they wanted to feel appreciated in class. The students indicated that the lecturers find it difficult to know students by name and as a result the students do not feel valued. As opposed to the small classes at honours level, the undergraduate classes are big:

The classes were big and the lecturers did not even know us by name and notice if you are absent. If you don't attend classes, you don't and that's it. At honours level, if you are absent it's noticeable because we are only 12. The lecturers know us individually and they also know our strengths and weaknesses. They can deal with our problems on a personal level and it feels good. It is important that lecturers pronounce your name and provide positive feedback to students. This rarely happened in our undergraduate years. (Memory)

Judy decided to remain as inconspicuous as possible:

We usually visited their offices when we handed in assignments. Most lectures seemed to be unapproachable except one or two. I think that's why I didn't have a one on one session with any of them. In addition, there was no need for me to go there because I usually get good scores. The lecturers should make an effort to understand students; and students need those reassurances from the lecturers.

Lisa indicated that self-motivation and passion for the course are important ingredients for success in one's undergraduate studies. She highlighted that there is not much that the lecturers could do but rather that the students have a vital role to play in the learning process. She stressed that learning is a process that involves two partners and both must play their roles well. From the quote, it was clear that agency was strongly valued:

The lecturers do not know us but there is not much they can do about it. It is up to the student to show personal interest in a subject. The student must approach lecturers with challenges that they face or approach the assigned tutor. Personal interest has to come into play because lecturers deal with a lot of students. (Lisa)

This section has highlighted the fact that students valued good student-lecturer relationships. The interviews suggest that the relationships students have with their lecturers can have a big influence on their attitude towards the attendance of lectures. Lecturers who are approachable, friendly and who recognise students in their teaching are liked by all the students. The students also value detailed PowerPoint presentations where lecturers do not simply reproduce what is in the textbooks. Although the students value discussions and debates, they reported not always understanding them.

6.6 Opportunities, capabilities and functionings that matter

The extent to which the curriculum, pedagogical arrangement and learning experiences expanded students' well-being and their agency was found to vary at this university. Three issues that came quite strongly to the fore in this chapter are:

i) Some basic capabilities for sociologists are being developed,

ii) Students are able to act on things that are important to them under difficult circumstances, and lastly

iii) Students' agency is constrained and pedagogical arrangements are constraining students' opportunities and choices to become and do what they have reason to value.

The students clearly valued what they learned and the knowledge they received during the lectures. They described the way in which the sociology curriculum has enabled them to think about new things in different ways. For example, the students clearly valued the ability to critically engage with contemporary issues and debates in society. Lisa showed an appreciation of different sociological phenomena such as poverty and could understand and feel for those in difficult circumstances. Whilst Memory and Judy indicated that the curriculum enabled them to expand their freedoms, they were dubious about whether the rest of their colleagues had acquired some of the mentioned functionings such as becoming critical. This in a way signals that the expansion of real freedoms enabling them to live and act is compromised. Table 6.1 presents the capabilities that students had reason to value as extrapolated from the interviews.

Table 6.1: Capabilities dimensions extrapolated from interviews with EU students

Capabilities	Clear examples drawn from the chapter and who listed the capability
i) Critical thinking	*I am a more critical than I was before. Previously I would naturally uptake whatever I was told or whatever was available. I remember I used to call my mom a monster, meaning that she dictated everything at home but I got to a point where everything is based on conversation, conversation based on reason more than culture and traditional beliefs. I have become more open minded and confident.* (Emma)
ii) Sociological knowledge/imagination	*It introduced this new sociological perspective that most of us did not have. As a result, we are now able to view the world in a different way, a lot of things that we do have been prescribed.* (Precious)
iii) Multiple perspectives	*Listed by all students*
iv) Employability	*Of course students need to be prepared for the world of work. I used to think that it was the duty of an individual to find a job alone. As I seek employment it's not only about me but also the qualification. I battle to find a job even with a post grad degree now. The staff members just tell you that there are so many opportunities out there, yet upon searching for jobs I get advertisements saying that they need a social worker or a psychologist.* (Lisa)
v) Autonomy and voice	*I think the education that we received enabled us to act independently and question things. I observed it in my honours class that the foundational knowledge that I got during my first three years (undergraduate) is helpful. I am not afraid to ask my lecturers why some things are the way they are. If I don't understand the logic behind the explanation I can even challenge it, and I am now able to have academic discussion without being offended. I believe that in the first three years they gave us the tools to know how to tackle and pose questions.* (Lisa)
vi) Resilience	*I came to this city on the invitation of my friend and when I arrived I couldn't get through to her (cell phone). In fact, she didn't pick up her phone. It was my first time coming to a big city with lots of people, robots [traffic lights] and cars but I managed to protect myself from all the bad things that could have happened to me. I befriended a certain girl who took care of me until I found a place of my own. So you can see that it (resilience) comes from far.* (Memory)
vii) Aspirations	*It is high time students aspire about the future and world of work when enrolling at universities. If we take for instance someone with 'Industrial Sociology', he can be outshone by someone who has studied 'Industrial psychology' or 'Human resources'. So one lags behind in that regard and can hardly compete on the market*. (Precious)
viii) Recognition	*The classes were big and the lecturers did not even know us by name and notice if you are absent. If you don't attend classes, you don't and that's it. At honours level, if you are absent it's noticeable because we are only 12. The lecturers know us individually and they also know our strengths and weaknesses. They can deal with our problems on a personal level and it feels good. It is important that lecturers pronounce your name and provide positive feedback to students. This rarely happened in our undergraduate years.* (Memory)
ix) Empathy	*I wasn't interested in knowing what my neighbours or the community were going through. I wasn't interested in their lives how they were affected by lack of service delivery etc. Now I don't only think about my parents, but others who live in the community, those who can't afford to drive out to buy water, I reflect on how that (shortage of water) affect them? I try to imagine what they are going through. If I didn't study sociology I wouldn't care about other people who do not have water. But now I understand that we need each other as much as we can. I am more understanding of other people's circumstances than before*. (Lisa)

Whilst education ought to be about what people are able to be and do, there are also capabilities and functionings that students have reason to value but which were not acquired. Complex functionings were found to be limited, such as having more in-class time for debate and discussion with their peers. The students also highlighted lack of participation, especially in lectures where instructors read their PowerPoint slides without engaging students in discussions.

The students also clearly valued pedagogical relationships with their lecturers where they were recognised and positively reinforced through comments made by the lecturer. They also acknowledged the importance of content expertise but that the social-ethical aspect of lecturers' pedagogy was absent. The pedagogy, in the form of PowerPoint slides, was found to be more concerned with delivering knowledge for students to pass than with developing active agents. Furthermore they felt that the adopted pedagogy failed to recognise the variety of difference and resources that students bring to learning. All these constraints are counter-productive to capabilities expansion.

Although students are able to act on things that are important to them under difficult circumstances, students' agency was found to be constrained under conditions that were counter-productive. The modules were found to be designed by lecturers on the basis of their own personal interest and expertise. Other than the student evaluation exercise which was not taken seriously, the students did not participate in the development of the curriculum or the identification of topics to be covered. In spite of their limited agency in the design of the curriculum, Lisa and Precious were better off than other students as they had attended better schools. This can also been seen in the agency they exercised upon enrolment for the Bachelor of Social Science degree and their expressed hopes and expectations of the degree. Lisa decided to quit other degree programmes for the sociology major degree because she felt that this is what she really wanted. Precious reported feeling more confident about making certain life choices concerning a suitable time to enter into marriage and the qualities sought in a life partner.

In a nutshell, sociology curriculum and pedagogy is expanding students' capabilities but there are other things that they might have reason to value which are not indeed expanding. Students' agency was found to be constrained and this is demonstrated by their employment aspirations. The students were found not to know who they were in terms of their profession. They choose both the degree and the careers they end up following without much information

to guide them in their choices; this constraining their aspirational capabilities. Students were found to have difficulty imagining a different future as they do not know what is out there. As it stands, the curriculum itself is a limiting factor in its restricted capability to allow diverse students to gain the knowledge, skills, and understandings required to maximise their freedom as job-seekers and for their development as individual personalities, as confident citizens of their own countries, and as informed global citizens.

Chapter 7: Lecturer experiences and perspectives on curriculum and pedagogy at Inclusive University

> "True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their to create their own". (Kazantzakis N.D.)

7.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters examined how lecturers and students at EU viewed curriculum design. Chapter 5 reported that there was agreement among lecturers on the lack of a unifying framework to justify and give direction to what the curriculum is striving to achieve. Moreover, lecturers agreed on functionings that are important for sociologists and these included critical thinking, having multiple perspectives, as well as the ability to analyse and conduct research. However, there was less evidence to show commitment that knowledge was intentionally selected to develop graduate functionings. This chapter presents a qualitative report on the experiences and perspectives of sociology lecturers' on curriculum and pedagogy at Inclusive University (IU) in South Africa. As was the case in Chapter 5, this report is based on interviews which aimed to understand what these academics consider and value when they design a curriculum and its pedagogic strategies. Furthermore, I sought to examine and create links between curriculum design and human capabilities formation with students. The chapter is divided into three sections: the first section outlines the nature and scope of the FoH and locates the DoS within the FoH. The second section presents views, experiences, and voices of a sample of lecturers (N=6) and the conclusion.

7.2 Overview of the Faculty of Humanities at IU

The FoH comprised 18 academic departments ranging from modern and ancient languages to the social sciences and psychology. It offered more than 12 undergraduate degree programmes, catering for a wide range of study and career opportunities. Given the broad range of programmes offered, students had ample choice and a variety of options to suit their interests, needs and aspirations. The education that is provided within the department can be foregrounded within the broader vision, mission and values stipulated by the FoH in their 2013 undergraduate prospectus (Table 7.1). From the key words (bolded), there was nothing about the employment capability which is advanced by both the capabilities approach and HCT. However, vision statement phrases such as '**the ideals of human dignity**, **freedom of expression'** and the '**pursuit of knowledge'**, in order to advance our understanding and to '**increase the social good',** align with the capabilities approach. In their values they

mentioned **integrity and respect for diversity and human dignity.** The aforementioned sits well with the capabilities approach which values human dignity, as advanced by Nussbaum (2010).

Table 7.1: Summary: FoH Vision and Mission statements	
Vision	Be premier Faculty of Humanities, committed to excellence in scholarship and tuition, and **to the ideals of human dignity**, **freedom of expression** and the **pursuit of knowledge**, in order to advance our understanding and to **increase the social good**.
Mission	The FoH is committed to high quality programmes, innovative and committed teaching, illustrious research outputs, public, intellectual activities, an intellectually stimulating and culturally diverse environment
Values	• Academic distinction • **Integrity and respect for diversity and human dignity** • Academic freedom and accountability • Individual and collective effort • Creation and dissemination of new knowledge

Source: IU FoH 2013

According to the 2016 undergraduate prospectus, the Faculty stated that it aimed to produce graduates with, among many other functionings:

i) Advanced analytical skills,

ii) Critical thinking skills,

iii) Independent and progressive thinking,

iv) Ability to contribute towards all forms of human knowledge, and

v) Who can make dynamic interventions in their chosen professions.

The Faculty stated that humanities graduates contribute towards the social good of society. These functionings fit with the normative values of teaching and designing sociology curricula/pedagogy. As advanced in capabilities formation, the functionings assist students to become better people. What is important to note is that they refer to issues of employability when they say 'chosen professions'. This suggests that issues of student employability are important at faculty level. The capability of employability is important in both human capabilities and human capital approaches (Chiappero-Matinetti and Sabadash 2014).

7.2.1 Overview of the DoS

The DoS stipulated the vision, mission statements and core values at the forefront of the education they provide. As stated on their website, the vision and mission statements emphasise the cultivation of critical thinking (Table 7.2).

Table 7.2: Summary: DoS vision, mission and core values	
Vision	The vision of the department is to be a research-led department advancing **critical, professional**, policy and public sociology.
Mission	• Undertake high quality, socially relevant research and publication; • Cultivate an optimal learning experience that engenders **critical engagement** with a changing world; • Integrate teaching and social commitment with **cutting-edge research**
Core Values	• Academic freedom; • **Diversity and social justice**; • **Life-long learning**

Source: IU 2015

7.2.2 DoS student enrolment in 2014

Statistics from the department reflect a steady increase in enrolment numbers within the last five years. Enrolment figures within the department show that only 1610 enrolled in 2010; which increased to 2130 in 2013, another slight increase to 2210 in 2014 and in 2015 the enrolment figure stood at 2300 students. The enrolment trend shows a large group at first year level, with the numbers decreasing slightly at second year level and a significant drop in enrolment at third year level. According to one of the participants the large drop at third year level might be due to financial issues; particularly the shrinking of National Student Financial Aid Scheme[50] (NSFAS) support in recent years ; and the drop out of students in the first year (see Section 1.1 for attrition and graduation rates). Another contributing factor to the noticeable drop across the years is seen as the fact that sociology does not have its own undergraduate programme and most students take sociology up to the third year as a second major in a psychology, journalism, corporate communication, and development studies degree programme, among others. It was also highlighted that if sociology was a stand-alone programme, the third year enrolments would have been much higher. Sociology does not seem to be a popular first major at IU.

Table 7.3: IU sociology student enrolment				
	1st year students	**2nd year students**	**3rd year students**	**Grand total**
2015	1100	950	250	2300
2014	1100	900	210	2210
2013	1200	750	180	2130
2010	900	600	110	1610

[50] A NSFAS bursary is a sum of money received by poor students enrolled in public universities to cover the cost of studies in South Africa.

IU is a comprehensive[51] university and reflects the general outlook of the higher education landscape in terms of the type of students enrolled in South Africa. The minimum admission requirement for a Bachelor of Arts degree programme is a NSC score of 25 with mathematical literacy[52] as one of its constituent subjects. In comparison, the minimum admission requirement for a Bachelor of Arts degree programme at another research intensive university is a much higher NSC score of 34. The normal entry at EU was 30. A scan of the literature suggests that there is no uniform policy for access in terms of admission scores and as a result universities have different admission requirements.

7.3 Outline of lecturer perceptions

The key codes that emerged from the analysis of the data have been used to discuss lecturers' perspectives and attitudes towards curriculum design and pedagogy. The codes are: access to university, curriculum development and knowledge acquisition, student functionings, pedagogical relationships, employability and systemic constraints facing sociology teaching and learning. I start the chapter by discussing lecturers' views on students' access to university and their perceptions of how students view the sociology major.

As with EU, the minimum duration of study is three years, and four years for the extended programme. The extended programme is offered to students who have a lower NSC score but who have been identified as having potential to improve their scores to qualify for full degree or diploma status. This is an alternative access programme that provides foundation learning through intensive one-year courses that are intended to improve the chances of graduating in minimum time. In addition to the entry requirements, the DoS stipulates career opportunities and the purpose of the Bachelor of Arts degree (Table 7.4). This is aimed at providing students with relevant information so that they can make informed choices when enrolling for the programme. The students are also given an idea of the career opportunities available to sociology graduates.

[51] The university is a merger of three universities which reflects a unique academic and comprehensive range of learning programmes, leading to a variety of qualifications from vocational and traditional academic to professional and postgraduate across the four campuses. Its campuses reflect different characteristics and cultures, contributing to the institution's rich diversity.

[52] Mathematics or mathematical literacy marks comprise 61%, with an admission point score of 4.

Table 7.4: IU BA Degree enrolment requirements			
Course	**Minimum APS[53] (NSC)**	**Career options**	**Purpose/skills**
Humanities BA 3 years minimum study period	25 – Mathematics OR 26 – Mathematical Literacy	Anthropologist, Journalist, Ethicist, Social Responsibility Officer, Manager of Multicultural and Gender Affairs, General Manager, Teacher, Human Resources Development, Public Governance, Civil Service	A successful student will have acquired the intellectual competencies and practical skills to discuss, problematise and investigate human conduct and interaction, particularly in the South African context.
BA Extended Degree Programmes* 4 years minimum study period	With Mathematics OR 23 with Mathematical Literacy	As above	As above

7.4 Access and success at university and in degree programmes

Four important points can be drawn from the interviews that were held with participants. They are: i) IU DoS students are diverse, ii) recruitment of students was conducted at FoH level, iii) most lecturers did not describe their students as 'weak' (even though the student profile is similar to EU), and iv) IU recruited students with higher admission scores than those students at EU.

As pointed out by Trace the majority of students enrolled at IU are black and are from low-income families. In addition to this they came from under-resourced secondary schools:

> *About 85% of our students are black and the majority of them are first-generation students. They come from poor backgrounds and there are a few (white and Indian) who come from middle class or well off families. The majority of them attended poor schools and English is not their first language.*

Most students suggested that the department enrolled students from diverse backgrounds and different capabilities, hence the need to understand who they are. This suggests that different students bring different resources to universities, calling for the curriculum and pedagogy to be sensitive to this. Because of interpersonal differences and conversion factors, the student body should not be treated as a homogeneous group, and this was not the case.

[53] The APS is the sum of the achievement scores in seven school subjects.

Five of the lecturers were found to be knowledgeable about the university's admission requirements but they reiterated that they had little to do with the process as it was handled at faculty level. However, the faculty provided evidence of clear admission requirements. One of the lecturers, Mary, explained:

> *The department is hardly involved in recruiting students. There are open days where we speak to students about what sociology is. Students ask us about sociology or what kind of career one would follow after completing the program or how much money one can earn with a sociology degree qualification. It's a way of trying to showcase the department and the discipline.*

Although the lecturers were not directly involved in recruitment, they reported attending these FoH open days. Their involvement in the annual open day presents them with an opportunity to showcase what their department offers and to interact with prospective students. According to these lecturers, open days also offer prospective students an opportunity to engage with lecturers from the various departments, to obtain information on how to apply, to interact with current students and so on. This information is important to enable prospective students to choose programmes that can position them to have a good life that they have reason to value or to secure better employment. As already mentioned, lecturers were not directly involved in the recruitment process and such involvement would have given them an idea of the kind of student enrolled. This can assist in designing appropriate curricula and pedagogical methods for students from different schooling backgrounds.

Unlike their counterparts at EU, the majority of lecturers did not describe their students as typically 'weak' or typically 'strong', but argued that the admissions score system was not a good criterion for determining students' academic strengths. The fact that they did not describe them as 'weak' (as compared to EU) might be perceived to provide us with an idea of their attitude towards the students:

> *Someone might be good in science while they can't conceptualise social problems at the end of the day. I have noticed this in my discussions with people outside the FoH. Someone who is studying mathematics for example can struggle to understand sociological imagination. It doesn't mean that they are weak but everybody has strengths and weaknesses and some people's strengths are more inclined to the humanities.* (Thomas)

Similarly Trace pointed out that people have different capabilities:

This admission scores business from where I stand does not work. It is just one indicator and it does not take into consideration multiple things that a student might have gone through at a particular time. So, sometimes you get students with very low scores and they make it to university and because their circumstances have changed, they get access to things they never got access to and they can do better.

Nonetheless, a Zimbabwean educated lecturer, John, commented on the students' disadvantaged schooling whilst associating the quality of students recruited with their outcomes:

Even students who are not supposed to be at university are enrolled. We are a comprehensive institution and we are meant to accommodate students from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Most of these students come from high schools that are poorly resourced with teachers who are not very competent, so it's difficult for students to get good matriculation passes.

Although the lecturer acknowledged the weaknesses of the South African secondary school system, he maintained that 'weak' students should not be enrolled as he compared the South African education system and the Zimbabwean one, the latter of which he thought was superior. He explained that a pass in the Zimbabwe secondary education system means getting a 50% score or more at either Advanced level or Ordinary level (once pegged to Cambridge standards), unlike in South Africa where 30% is still considered a pass at matriculation level. He pointed out that a South African secondary school graduate (matriculant) is equivalent to a form five graduate in Zimbabwe (Advanced level is form six). What can be ascertained is that five lecturers at IU lecturers had a better understanding that socio-economic factors such as poverty, the poor secondary school system and different academic capabilities contribute to the academic performance of the so called 'weak' students. However, IU is proactive concerning students' challenges as can be evidenced by the interventions that are being implemented. Examples of such interventions are the tutorship programme, the writing skills centre and the First Year Experience (FYE) approach (these interventions are explained in detail in the sections to follow).

Although the lecturers did not compare their students with those from other universities, their students obtained generally higher admission points than those from EU. It appeared from the interviews that the competition to secure a place at IU is stiff, hence their acquisition of better students compared to other universities. At departmental level there is a strong attempt to inform students on the career options available for sociology graduates and provision for graduate outcome skills.

To conclude this section, the interviews indicated that the student body is diverse, but the students possessed higher grades at matric than EU students. While it makes logical administrative sense for the FoH to conduct recruitment, departmental staff members can derive a better understanding of the kind of student that they recruit if they are involved.

7.5 Curriculum design and knowledge acquisition

Three big issues emerged concerning curriculum design and these are discussed under the following headings: educational philosophy, lecturer-valued knowledge, as well as lecturer engagement and student involvement.

7.5.1 Educational philosophy

As with EU, curriculum design at IU is not informed by any theoretical underpinnings. The DoS provided vision and mission statements as well as core values which provided the rationale as to why students were learning what they were learning. Five of the lecturers were conversant with these statements, while Trace professed ignorance:

> *The department is currently relying on the vision and mission statements provided by the FoH. We are still having discussions about our own position and looking at the possibility of developing our own vision and mission statements.*

Although the lecturers were conversant with the mission statements, it appeared as if they did not really make an issue of it. The assumption is that the common understanding of the purpose of education makes it possible for all teaching to be aligned in one direction. In this case there is less evidence to suggest that the design of the curriculum is organised to achieve broad objectives and this made it difficult for me to determine whether the department was achieving the ends of education. However, what seemed to be evident is that some of the modules had clear educational aims which broadly encourage critical thinking and an analytical approach to social and organisational problems.

7.5.2 Lecturer-valued knowledge

All participants valued the acquisition of knowledge by students. They agreed that key theoretical frameworks drawn from Marx, Weber, and Durkheim need to be taught to introduce students to sociological thinking and knowledge, and to assist them to understand and explain societies, relationships, and social behaviour. They pointed out that sociology deals with diverse issues in everyday interactions, hence the need to introduce the students to sociological concepts and theoretical paradigms which are fundamental during the first year.

The same was also reported at EU and is related to the field of sociology, as commented on by Janet:

> *We focus on teaching the students the language of sociology because sociology has its language like any other discipline. We are dealing with social issues; social relationships and we use the language concepts that are used in everyday lives. Secondly, it's important to understand the basic theoretical underpinnings of sociology, we teach Marx, Durkheim and Weber because they are the three white male northern scholars that form the core of sociology but we feel that it's also important to apply their thinking to South African circumstances. So it is the duty of the lecturer to bring in expertise and relate it to the module being offered.*

The lecturers noted that sociology courses acted as building blocks and they endeavoured to establish and maintain a common thread in learning. Lecturers are cognisant of sequencing of courses when designing course modules, with their views summarised by Janet:

> *Most of our courses build on prior courses and when designing a course it is a matter of reflecting on what students would have learned and taking them to the next level. Most of these courses have been designed after careful consideration and once they are being implemented it's a matter of revising and restructuring.*

Because sociology courses are part of a sequence of compulsory courses, it is important for lecturers to be familiar with the material that is covered by previous courses. The sequencing and progression of modules is discussed in staff meetings. Another lecturer, Thomas, commented that the courses were indeed linked to one another:

> *I am teaching 'Clinical Sociology', it's linked to a lot of other courses that we offer so all of the courses speak to each other. For example we have 'Group Dynamics' and 'Conflict Studies' which speak to each other nicely.*

Lecturers had a better sense of module sequencing and progression than at EU. All the lecturers were conversant with the requirements of the NQF, but they explained that the progression level was not something they thought about and discussed every day. One of the lecturers, Janet, added that the curriculum was developed over a long period and she pointed out that issues of progression are dealt with at that conceptual level:

> *The curriculum was developed and fine-tuned over time. The undergraduate curriculum is based on what standard South African curricula tend to address, but it is also shaped to address key and contemporary debates. We don't really talk about or focus on NQF levels, I am sure issues of NQF were dealt with when the courses were conceptualised.*

The lecturers also highlighted that they used their own expert knowledge to guide curriculum design. There is a link between teaching scholarship and curriculum development and it seemed the lecturers had theoretical perspectives on teaching as evidenced by reports on how they handled large classes.

7.5.3 Lecturer engagement and student involvement

The lecturers were found to value departmental engagement among themselves. Coordination and consultation takes place internally as lecturers depend on each other's strengths and expertise in designing the curricula of various courses. Lecturers consult each other when curricula are designed, thus utilising the expertise within the department (the various areas of lecturer expertise are provided on the website). Mary commented:

> *The process on who decides what goes into the module is based on consultation. We hold broad departmental discussions on different issues that include curriculum. So for continuity reasons, people with one year or two years' experience will be paired with someone more experienced than them. For example, Thomas was paired with Professor Janet who is an expert in 'Family Sociology'. She leads the design of the curriculum whilst engaging with the junior lecturer*.

Thomas agreed, commenting that:

> *We sat down with the professor who was leading the 'Clinical Sociology' course. We discussed the course in terms of what should go in, where it should go and what needs to be changed. It's a collaborative exercise that we go through. We share ideas with one another as the course progresses. We also discuss the exam questions together, and we do everything together.*

To encourage mutual interactions, the lecturers indicated that the department periodically initiated retreats where teaching staff reflected on the curricula and pedagogy. This was last done in the previous year (that is 2014).

Although curriculum design was found to be guided by the faculty's mission statements, as at EU, lecturers indicated that curriculum design was also influenced by other external factors, for example, what other universities were offering. John elaborated on this as follows:

> *What normally happens is that we compare our course guide with what others will be offering elsewhere. After that, we can improve where we think we are lacking.*

Lecturers made it clear that they valued students' ability to provide feedback on their own learning. One of the ways that they capture students' views was through the student evaluation exercise. All lecturers concurred to varying degrees that module design was a top-down

approach. Three lecturers pointed out that they utilised the student evaluation forms to capture students' input. Thomas urged other lecturers to consider students' input, highlighting that there were numerous channels through which students communicated curriculum design input and concerns:

> *The students complete student evaluation forms which we consider. They have our email addresses, they can also utilise the electronic discussion forum and our electronic website that they can use to post questions. They are allowed to come and consult with us and the tutors. The tutors themselves are the middlemen between lecturers and the students.*

The structure of the Bachelor of Arts with a sociology major has been carefully developed by lecturers over the years. If a student chooses to take the sociology major, the courses are compulsory and there are no electives (Table 7.5). Although prescribing courses to students with less sociology knowledge is helpful, the students are, however, not given the opportunity to exercise agency in selecting courses that they might value or have reason to value.

In the humanities undergraduate yearbook, information about module title, module content, purpose, and student learning outcomes is provided. An example is found in the 'Social Theory and Family' module, which was conceived with the aim to provide an introduction to sociological concepts and to develop an understanding of basic theoretical frameworks that shape the relationship between the individual and society (IU 2015). This module's content focusses on the examination of individuals in society, the sociological imagination, social institutions (for example family, work place and religion) and social challenges (for example crime and deviance). The learning outcomes given include being able to define sociological concepts (Table 7.5). Another example is found in the 'Group Dynamics' module. The purpose of this module is to introduce the learner to key concepts related to social divisions and to develop a substantive understanding of their theoretical underpinnings. The content focusses on the exploration of social divisions and their dynamics as manifested in, for example, race, class, gender and power relations (IU 2015). The curriculum offers a critical understanding of how society works, exposes students to social issues such as inequalities, class, how organisations work, the impact of religion, and globalisation. The humanities undergraduate yearbook seems to offer enough information about different course and subjects, providing students with the opportunity to understand and select their preferred programmes and modules. In support of this, students pointed out that the yearbook was helpful in choosing different degree programmes but not the prescribed subjects. The learning outcomes of each module highlight what students can expect to gain after taking the module.

Table 7.5: Structure of BA with a sociology major

Year	Semester	Module	Learning outcomes
1st yr	Term 1	Social Theory and Family NQF level 5/6	Define basic concepts, describe theories relating to key themes, apply theoretical frameworks and concepts to own experience, understand and avoid plagiarism and to demonstrate an ability to use the library.
	Term 2	Deviance and Religion NQF level 5/6	
	Term 3	Power, State and the Work Place NQF level 5/6	Define basic concepts such as race, class, gender, poverty etc. Describe theories relating to key themes, apply theoretical frameworks and concepts to own experience, understand and avoid plagiarism, demonstrate an ability to use the library.
	Term 4	Gender, Class and Race NQF level 5/6	
2nd yr	Term 1	Group Dynamics NQF level 5/6	Discuss and analyse central themes relating to interactive dynamics between individuals in groups, discuss and explain social conflicts, apply insights to real life situations and other examples, explain these phenomena theoretically.
	Term 2	Conflict Studies NQF level 5/6	
	Term 3	Clinical Sociology NQF level 5/7	Discuss and analyse central themes relating to Clinical Sociology, discuss and analyse central themes relating to population dynamics, apply insights to real life situations and other examples, explain these phenomena theoretically.
	Term 4	Population Dynamics NQF level 5/7	
3rd yr	Term 1	Social Research Methodology NQF level 6/7	Conceptualise, conduct and report on qualitative research, critically discuss and reflect work place issues within a theoretical framework.
	Term 2	Industrial Sociology NQF level 6/7	
	Term 3	Globalisation NQF level 6/7	Critically discuss and explain classical and contemporary theory and theories of globalisation, Conceptualise, conduct and report on qualitative research.
	Term 4	Sociological Theory NQF level 6/7	

Source: IU undergraduate yearbook (2015)

From the above, four conclusions can be drawn relating to the curriculum design process at the IU. Firstly, the curriculum aligns in many ways to FoH and DoS values and vision of producing critically thinking graduates. Developing critical thinkers' remains embedded in curriculum teaching and learning, as well as in assessment. Secondly, as in most other Sociology

Departments, the department remains divided as to how to integrate aspects of employability attributes within the curriculum in order to improve graduate outcomes. Thirdly, in trying to address this dilemma of the skills and attributes needed for graduates to compete favourably in the job market, the department has investigated curricula of other universities while also making use of the expertise of academics from diverse teaching and academic backgrounds. Lastly, students have limited choices in course selection, and the design of the curriculum is largely influenced from the top.

7.6 Student functionings

Firstly, the intention to develop critical students was advanced in student assessments in both tests and examinations. The lecturers used short questions and essays in their examinations. As with EU, they did not set multiple choice questions which demand less thinking and more rote learning. The application of essay questions in examinations challenges students to think critically and cohesively when dealing with particular issues in their writing. Drawing from the course modules and exam papers, Table 7.6 shows examples of the questions used to challenge students to think critically. During the interviews lecturers said that they ask essay-type questions in written form and that the questions start with phrases such as: '*critically analyse' or 'critically discuss'*. In asking questions aimed to elicit shorter answers, the lecturers ('Religion, Crime and Deviance' module) reported using phrases such as: '*Why would', 'Discuss', 'Critically analyse'* and '*What do you think'* to encourage critical thinking. These questioning techniques help to develop critical thinking as the responses require students to support their answers with evidence.

Table 7.6: Questions aimed at developing critical thinking		
Course title	**Exam: Essay-type question**	**Exam short question**
Theory and Family	Discuss Murdock's definition of family. Critically analyse this definition by referring to i) the Nayar family, ii) the family in Jamaica, iii) the Kibbutz, and iv) gay families (25 marks)	Why would feminists criticise Talcott Parsons? (5 marks) What is the author's main argument?
Religion, Crime and Deviance	Critically discuss the Marxist view of religion (25 marks)	Discuss the two main approaches in defining religion
Clinical Sociology	Are third world countries growing too rapidly? Critically discuss with reference to the following three approaches: The Functionalist approach, the Marxist perspective and the Interactionist perspective (25 marks).	Describe the role of sociologists in Social Impact assessment (10 marks)

In addition, one of the assessment approaches used to cultivate critical thinking and debate was through having students play the role of 'devil's advocate'. This ensured that the functioning of 'voice' was deemed valuable by students, as indicated by Thomas:

> *We are looking for that voice, we ask them what they think about an issue, whether they agree or not, and they should give the reasons to support what they say. We teach them to play the devil's advocate to say, 'How would this be if we consider a b c…?' The aim is to explore the thought further.*

Secondly, theoretical paradigms were used to introduce students to the classical texts of sociology. All lecturers highlighted that theoretical paradigms were used to develop student attributes such as critical thinking, sociological imagination and multiple perspectives. One lecturer commented:

> *By exposing students to different theoretical paradigms […].The paradigms can be radical, conventional or neutral and at the end of the day the onus is on the students to decide for themselves which paradigm they would use when faced with a particular issue. Each paradigm allows a person to use a different lens to analyse a given situation.* (Abby)

The lecturers' comments suggest that philosophers such as Marx, Weber, and Durkheim influence the design of the undergraduate curriculum at IU. Critical thinking and sociological imagination constitute the dominant graduate outcomes elaborated on by all lecturers and they described how they endeavour to develop these in teaching and through assessments.

Besides the vision and mission statements there is less evidence to show that the department shared philosophical aims with which to guide the education that they provide. However, the lecturers and the DoS website indicated that the course modules encouraged critical thinking and an analytical approach in different places in the curriculum. In the interviews lecturers were asked to list functionings (attributes) that are important for a sociologist. A total of eight functionings were extrapolated as shown in Table 7.7. To some extent, the table shows that there is a shared idea of the attributes as stated in their mission and vision statements. The most common functionings were critical thinking, sociological imagination, multiple perspectives, and ability to conduct research.

Table 7.7:Important functionings for sociologists

Attributes	Abby	Trace	Janet	Mary	John	Thomas
Critical thinking	x	x	x	x	x	x
Sociological imagination	x	x	x	x	x	x
Holds complex, multiple perspectives of social reality	x	x		x		x
Research-focussed graduate		x	x	x	x	x
Global citizen			x	x	x	
Ability to write		x	x		x	
Empathetic and communally oriented	x					
Well informed individual			x			

Thirdly, lecturers identified the difference between desired and achieved functionings. The lecturers were then presented with a list of graduate functionings and were asked to rank these starting with the more important ones (without necessarily weighting them, they were prioritised as important for sociologists). Four of the six lecturers participated in the exercise. Of those four, John and Thomas noted that all the attributes are of equal importance while Janet and Abby reported that critical thinking is the most important functioning. However,

Abby noted that the ability to carry out research is a more practical functioning and encompasses critical thinking, thus rendering it her most important outcome:

> *Critical thinking is the most important attribute. However, the ability to carry out research is more on a practical level and I would say that it is very important overall.*

While Abby ranked research-focussed functioning highly, Janet placed it at sixth position. Janet placed global citizenry in the second place, while Abby ranked it fifth. Overall, critical thinking and sociologically imaginative thinking were highly ranked by both. Both lecturers placed the ability to write and be empathetic and communally oriented at the bottom of the list.

Table 7.8.: Ranked student functionings

Rank	Janet	Abby	John	Thomas
1	Critical thinker	Research-focussed graduate	All important	All important
2	Global citizen	Critical thinker	All important	All important
3	Well informed individual	Sociologically imaginative thinker	All important	All important
4	Holds complex, multiple perspectives of social reality	Holds complex, multiple perspectives of social reality	All important	All important
5	(Sociologically) Imaginative thinker	Global citizen	All important	All important
6	Empathetic and communally oriented	Empathetic and communally orientated	All important	All important
7	Research-focussed graduate	Ability to write	All important	All important
8	Ability to write	Well informed individual	All important	All important

When asked to clarify what an 'ideal' sociology graduate constitutes, all lecturers emphasised the importance of critical thinking, sociological imagination and having multiple perspectives as stated by Trace:

> *I want them to be able to see things, which means to connect the dots, to see the things that are hidden, and to see how power operates. They are not all going to become academics, people will work in different places but I want them to able to use sociological thinking in the different spaces they will occupy. I want critical thinking to inform solutions to the problems they face.*

Mary commented:

> *We want skilled graduates, who are confident to carry out research, with good analytical thinking to market themselves out there. We want professional graduates, we are looking at skills citizenry and we are trying to build black intellectuals specifically.*

Three graduate attributes that stand out as most sought after within the department are critical thinking, sociologically imaginative thinking and strong research skills. This suggests that the department valued these functionings. However, when asked if they are producing graduates who are critical of knowledge and society, only three of the lecturers concurred that the DoS was producing graduates with desired attributes for a sociologist, as expressed by Thomas:

> *We are producing competent critical graduates. Our graduates are in government, higher education, and some are working in human resources.*

The other three lecturers were hesitant in their responses. Abby laughingly commented:

> *Yeah I think so, to a degree we are producing critical graduates but there are students who literally think that being a critical thinker is about being negative, you know what I mean. Like you criticise that person and that person and that person but I always tell them that they need to dig deeper for meaning. They need to separate facts from opinions. So I think in first year they learn the basic concepts, in second year they start engaging more deeply and in third year they should be at that stage where they can become critical thinkers.*

In sum, all the lecturers exhibited knowledge of the functionings which are deemed important for sociologists and there was evidence of strong attempts to develop functionings such as critical thinking and adopting multiple perspectives through theoretical paradigms. However, the interviews also revealed conflicting perspectives on the actual achievement of these functionings, which points to a potential gap between desired and achieved functionings.

7.7 Employment opportunities

Most lecturers have a human capital perception of a sociology degree, and indicated that sociology ought to integrate issues of employment in the curriculum. However, a minority of participants felt that the sociology degree is not aimed towards any particular job, but rather at providing students with the necessary skills for them to be good citizens.

While sociology was seen as a discipline that provides general skills, four lecturers realised the importance of skills for employment. They suggested that the skills that are gained as a result of studying sociology need to be honed for a specific field. However, the lecturers were not sure if this could be achieved at undergraduate level. John commented:

At the end of the day I think students who study sociology might have to augment or supplement their academic qualifications with other professional courses. This applies to students here and elsewhere. This also depends on the interest of the individual, for instance, if one wants to pursue a career in human resources, they have to consider taking some professional courses in personnel management.

While graduate employability in South Africa and globally remains a critical aspect for all universities, faculties and departments, opinions on the role of a sociology degree in enhancing graduate employment outcomes at the IU remain divided. While a number of academics think that the curriculum should be sensitive to what graduates can do with the degree in the real world, other academics think a sociology degree should be pursued for the intrinsic values of knowledge and intellectual development. One of the lecturers, Abby, emphasised the need to undertake research to get a clearer picture of current trends in graduate employability:

I have carried out research on the kind of jobs that sociology graduates get in South Africa and I have seen that young people need education that responds to employment requirements. I found out that a person who knows and who can apply mixed research methods has a competitive advantage in the job market.

Mary disagreed, insisting that the discipline of sociology must not focus on training students in a particular field. She commented:

Sociology is not a vocational subject and we have debated whether it should be or shouldn't be. It's not that there are huge explicit differences that we fight about but there are those who value it precisely for the fact that it's not a vocational discipline and that it's about critical engagement and its ability to deal with broad societal issues.

Others argued that the sociology curriculum prepares students for work by making connections between theory and practices. Janet argued for the need to strike a balance between the development of skills for private benefit (human capital) and public benefit (human development):

We might decide on one thing that is popular in the market at the moment and in three years' time it's not popular anymore. We are not supposed to teach students recipes but teach them the skills to make or adapt to different situations. Who decides what the market wants? The market is not static. The students have to understand basic building standards of how things work and what makes them not work (failing to find work). When the market changes they can adapt these skills to different kinds of environment.

Although different views existed about graduate employability, the department claimed that they had courses or modules which were designed to widen employment opportunities. This was expressed as follows by Janet:

The majority of our courses are very important but there are courses such as 'Sociology of work', which tries to problematise work and 'Clinical Sociology' which offers a humanistic approach to improving human lives, for instance, through conflict resolution, mediation, counselling etc. Such courses prepare students for work.

Another participant noted that the students lacked practical learning or some form of internship, and she suggested that the department should consider introducing Service Learning as a way of exposing students to the world of work. Trace captured this as follows:

I think like students from other disciplines Service Learning will be important. Through Service Learning they will realise that they don't know everything, so when they get into a job they must be prepared to learn. On the job training is very important and we need to emphasise that to our students so that they learn some skills here but that there are still more skills that they will have to learn on the job.

The debate on whether to incorporate graduate employability issues when designing curricula appeared to have been an ongoing one in the department. What is evident is that there have been attempts to equip students with skills relevant for the world of work. However, there were a few voices that subtly raised concerns about how the curriculum could widen employment opportunities without eroding the traditional critical discourse that sociology is known for.

7.8 Pedagogical relationships

This section examines whether curriculum intentions were aligned with pedagogical approaches. Similar to EU, the methods of transmitting knowledge are more technological in nature as necessitated by the large size of the classes. However, interviews revealed an attempt on the part of the lecturers to cultivate functionings deemed important for sociologists through the use of case studies, discussions and debates during lectures and seminars. It was also discovered that the pedagogical arrangements relied more strongly on technological methods than personal contact.

The teaching methods found to be commonly used in the department included lectures where content was delivered verbally, in writing and through PowerPoint presentations. In this approach students are treated as a homogenous group with little attention paid to diversity. However, there was evidence of teaching methods tailored to suit students enrolled in the department where, for example, attention was given to the classification of sociological terms through the use of diagrams and pictures where language constituted a barrier to learning, as explained by Janet:

We encourage mastery of content through studying of texts, the use of quizzes, short and long essay questions. We make adequate use of slides and useful pictures to make abstract ideas more accessible. We pay attention to issues of language to make content and textbook-language accessible to our multi-lingual student population.

A lecturer's job is to facilitate learning for students who have some useful knowledge and experiences on which they can build. Trace and Thomas acknowledged that knowledge co-production happened in class where lecturers and students interact in a learning environment. In this regard Trace pointed out:

I think my students know that my job is to allow them to bring knowledge to the fore and inform it using other ways of thinking. So I think for sociological grounding, students' creativity and their own sense of who they become in the world in relation to everything else they think about is important. I don't go to the classroom claiming that I have all the answers. I go to the classroom thinking that they are knowledgeable; they just need me to show them how else they can see the world. I bring new sociological tools on board, how they can open those doors that are closed. There is something in sociology that will help them understand and see things differently.

As elsewhere, lecturers raised concerns about the challenges of using other teaching methods such as debates and discussions during lectures:

In our third year we normally have an average of 200 students and the large numbers are not only affecting the lecturer student relationship but participation, confidence and agency. Just imagine conducting a lecture to such a big group without a microphone, it is difficult to engage with all students, especially the ones at the back. (Janet)

This appeared to mean that debates and discussions were difficult to manage in large classes. Nonetheless, they remain important teaching methods that can help students develop functionings such as critical thinking.

Arguably, there is evidence from most lecturers that students come to university with vastly different experiences and widely varying resource 'bundles'. Lecturers therefore have the responsibility of making an effort to contextualise the delivery of content in relation to students' life experiences. To illustrate this Trace gave the following example:

An example is when I teach the 'Race and gender' course to the first years. What usually comes up in the discussions is the assumption that men are always significant and indispensable in community. You can actually that students actually think that men are more important than females in families. In such a case, I challenge them by asking how many of them actually live with men or were raised by men. The students will realise that it is women who are raising families in South Africa but because of societal expectations men seem more

important. So I just bring in new tools for them to see the world differently, but the beliefs are already instilled from a young age.

Even though this does not happen on a big scale, the example above is evidence of the attempts that are made to involve students in the learning process by developing functionings pedagogically, thus challenging them to be active learners.

In understanding the link between curriculum and what the lecturers aim to develop in their students, the lecturers were asked to describe what they do to foster critical thinking in students. They all mentioned that they introduced students to different theoretical paradigms, which provided students with an understanding about different ways of thinking or addressing societal challenges. One lecturer, John, commented:

By exposing them to different theoretical paradigms [….]. The paradigms can be radical, conventional or neutral but at the end of the day the onus is on the students to then decide for themselves which paradigm they would use when faced with a particular issue. Each paradigm allows a person to use a different lens to analyse a given situation.

The lecturers also used case studies and real life scenarios or situations as a way to deliver content and develop critical thinking. They reported asking students about their opinions and had them evaluate case studies, as shown in an example provided by Thomas:

We have given them case studies for example in 'Group Dynamics', we have asked them to critically evaluate the Marikana tragedy in relation to how individuals behave when in a group situation. We have looked at xenophobia, showed them videos so that they could visualise and apply their minds accordingly.

The results showed that some academics made use of the diversity of student backgrounds to evoke or raise sensitive cross-cultural issues for students to discuss and to apply reasoning to their conversations and arguments. Mary pointed out that the diversity of the student body enabled discussions and debates about different opinions and multiple perspectives:

We have a group of diverse students coming from different backgrounds. Some come from townships. Others come from different religions, different nationalities, with different language etc. So it's quite a diverse bunch that we have and this affords us the opportunity to hear different perspectives in a class conversation.

Moreover, the DoS ran a weekly seminar series and lecturers regarded it as a way of cultivating critical thinking. The seminar has been hosted by the DoS since 2000. Renowned

internationally and locally acclaimed social scientists[54] are invited to present on a variety of salient topics and themes. The presenters are asked to circulate a written paper, which is distributed two weeks in advance, to allow participants to read in preparation of the seminar. After the presentation, the audience, including students, are expected to ask questions and engage in discussions. The intention of these seminars is to create a premier forum for academic discussion and intellectual debate as noted by Janet:

> *We are making seminars compulsory for our master's degree students and we encourage all students to attend. Internationally and nationally acclaimed social researchers present their papers and students see how academics argue. The presenter responds to difficult questions. In addition, we sponsor them to present at the South African Sociological Association (SASA) annual conference. This gives them the opportunity to present and argue meaningfully.*

Despite the attempts to increase personal contact, pedagogical relationships rely on technological methods of content delivery rather than personal contact. As at EU, the most commonly used technological platform for delivering content and communicating is Blackboard, as is seen in Abby's comment:

> *We use lectures to transmit knowledge and in those lectures PowerPoint is utilised. We also use Blackboard to post syllabus, notes and assignments. The large numbers compel us to use Blackboard more often.*

The students are expected to access Blackboard at least twice a week to ensure that they are up to date with course communication. One lecturer, Mary, expressed her appreciation and preference for using technology as she had received training in blended learning[55] which gave her the necessary skills to combine traditional face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning:

> *I was one of the few people to study 'Blended learning' and I take its possibilities very seriously as it affords students the opportunity to have online discussions while I also utilise face to face lectures. Blended learning has all the options that one can do to improve interaction within a large class.*

The above excerpts show that technology plays an increasingly important role in delivering content to students. The undergraduate students at IU were given tablet computers in their first year so that they could access information electronically. The younger lecturers seemed

[54] Academics hosted by the department over the years have includes Susan Parnell, Liz Stanley, Thomas Blom Hansen, Rehad Desai, Jo Beall, Min-Chang Tsai and Michael Burawoy.

[55] Blended learning is taken to be the practice of using both online and in-person learning experiences when teaching students.

to embrace the use of technology more than the older ones who insisted that students must attend lectures.

Although technology was embraced by most lecturers interviewed, Abby pointed out that it was contributing to the student-lecturer dependency syndrome[56]. The following examples are illustrative of lecturers who find the use of technology problematic:

> *I put very brief notes on Blackboard and that's why they hate me. I have observed that those who just study the slides usually get lower scores in tests because the notes are brief. So, I usually say to them that it's their own choice; they are the drivers of their own studies. So if they want 50% they can go ahead and study the slides only, but if they want more (marks) they must read and pay more attention in class.*

She went on to suggest that students' laziness made them embrace technological ways of knowledge delivery, voicing the following opinion:

> *Students sometimes think lecturers owe them something. I have had students who go to the Student affairs department to complain about me because I have put them on the spot. Why do they come to do this degree if they don't want to take notes, read and do all the things that students should do?* (Abby)

The responses of most lecturers suggest that they expect students to be active in the learning process as opposed to being passive receptors of notes, ideas and concepts. The lecturers became frustrated if learning experiences, which are supposed to be developmentally transformative, do not take place. Most of the lecturers held this perception of student participation in the learning process. However, it seemed the students were used to being 'spoon-fed' as it emerged from the interviews that students struggled to learn independently or even to take down their own notes. This points to a systematic weakness in developing students and might lead to the capability of autonomy being compromised. Moreover, the performativity culture seems to be exacerbating this idea through, for example, throughput rates.

Tutorials were compulsory and course modules provided details on how marks were allocated for attendance and participation. The tutorial schedule details the day, time, venue, activities of the day and the tutor in charge of the tutorial sessions. The DoS had a total of 15 tutors, with two tutors catering for a number of 250 third year students, five for 950 second year students

[56] Student-lecturer dependency syndrome refers to when learners requires teachers to give them most of the input for learning for example notes.

and 10 for 1100 first year students. The tutors ran smaller groups with an average of about 40 students per group:

> *A tutorial group usually comprises 40 students in a class and they all meet once in a week. At times it is not every week as that depends on the lecturer in charge of the module and the amount of public holidays etc. I know that in one term of my second years in 2014, they had three tutorials sessions in a seven week course. Usually it is three to four sessions per module.* (Abby)

The department employed master's degree students as tutors, but because they were not receiving enough applicants from the master's degree group they also considered honours students. The department, however, assigned honours students to first year students and the more experienced master's degree tutors to the second and third year students. The tutors were trained at the beginning of each academic year. Janet commented:

> *The university runs a training programme for them. We also train them in the Department. We have weekly meetings for tutors at which we make them rehearse and prepare them for each tutorial. We also have a staff member appointed as a 'Tutor Manager' and he/she attends to all their issues. The tutors are aware that if they perform academically and show that they are good in the classroom, they will be considered for future lecturing opportunities.*

However, comparing the current tutorial system at that time with what it used to be (probably six years back), Abby raised concerns about the large (average of 40 students in class) tutorial groups and wondered whether the student tutors possessed the necessary skills to manage such large numbers of students. Abby aired her views as follows:

> *It was really great when I was a tutor and we had smaller classes, we could really give individual attention to students, and in that way it's easy to identify what their problems are. I am increasingly becoming worried with the big numbers. I am not sure if the tutors are well trained to handle the big classes and I cannot comment on their training because I am not involved.*

The relatively low tutor-student ratio compared to the lecturer-student ratio was encouraging and served the purpose of developing participation, voice and engagement among the students. Tutors met students at a more individual level or in small groups. As a result, it became convenient for students to discuss their work with tutors thus utilising the opportunity to hone their communications skills and receive feedback. The fact that the DoS conducted department-specific training for their respective tutor contingents shows that the training was taken seriously.

To summarise this section, knowledge was transmitted through traditional lectures. The lectures paid less attention to diversity but there is evidence that lecturers are making an effort to encourage students to be active participants in the learning process. Whilst technological methods of content delivery are convenient, these techniques seem to reinforce student-lecturer dependency syndrome and students are said to become passive participants in the learning process. The results suggest that tutorials are helpful in that students could freely learn from their peers. The next section discusses the constraints faced by lecturers in performing their work.

7.9 Systemic constraints facing sociology teaching and learning

The first constraint which emerged from the interviews is related to social and institutional arrangements. Lecturers pointed out the challenge of ensuring student quality, engagement and more productive forms of teaching, while also meeting departmental and faculty targets regarding throughput rates. While the development of skills such as critical thinking and imaginative reasoning were clearly stated in the mission statement, there were constraints found in the form of large classes and achieving high throughput rates. As a result, students were being 'spoon-fed' to meet acceptable pass rates. John commented:

> *There is pressure because if the pass rate is not above 70% you are made to write a report. They normally prefer it to be 75% at least. So the pressure definitely exists to maintain high rates, and that is what then enhances this 'spoon feeding', which in my own opinion is just too much.*

In the opinion of four of the interviewed lecturers, university management was concerned with high pass and throughput rates without putting the necessary systems in place to achieve this. Nonetheless, Janet pointed that there was a possibility that quality was being compromised as a result of the pressure to produce high throughput rates. She reiterated that, for quality reasons, students who deserve to pass should pass and those who do not should fail:

> *I believe that we, as lecturers, should give students space to fail if they deserve to and that's fine. But then they (management) will blame you. So some lecturers are very scared to fail them and they try to protect them. That way we produce graduates who are not ready. I don't think failing is a problem; I think failing is an important creative aspect in growing up and of becoming.* (Janet)

The excerpt above indicates that it is important to contextualise the quality of education provided and the graduate produced. The majority of students were black and came from

poor backgrounds, and the IU had systems in place to assist such students to adapt to college life and their learning. This implies that affiliation or belonging is a key functioning observed by the university. An example of such a system is the First Year Experience[57] (FYE) approach, which is a transition and orientation programme conducted by the Academic Development and Support (ADS) unit. The FYE is a combination of curricular and co-curricular efforts across the entire institution, aimed at enabling first year student success.

Lecturers reiterated that quality was being compromised at IU. The department did not have guidelines for 'quality' and 'quality graduates' and thus were offering no common ground for good teaching. As it were, lecturers were somewhat satisfied with the quality of their work and output, even though concerns were voiced about factors such as the pressure to produce high throughput rates.

One lecturer, John, differed from his colleagues, arguing that quality cannot be assessed on the basis of throughput rates only:

> *There is no quality to talk about at undergraduate level. One could easily be ecstatic given the results, for instance, there was 91% pass rate last year (2014). By just looking at the statistics we might be very pleased but we should be worried about the quality because there is a lot of 'spoon feeding' going on. If I look at the way I was taught at the University of Zimbabwe, the amount of 'spoon feeding' which is done here (in South Africa) is too much. I also think that we are too generous with marks.*

While acknowledging the pressure on lecturers, Janet suggested that the department stood its ground against such pressure from the university management structure:

> *At one point, I was called to the Vice Deans office to explain why 72% was the throughput rate and why it was not higher. I had to explain that we only pass students who deserve to pass; you know what I am saying. We can't pass students who don't deserve to pass. But generally our pass rates are above 70% so we have maintained that. If we have 95% then we have a problem of an unusual extreme. We try to keep it reasonable and I don't think anyone has been put under pressure for throughput. It's not right but every lecturer knows that when it comes to performance management, when you have 50% of students passing then it does not look good. If, for example, others have an average of 80% pass rate and yours is 50% then questions are going to be raised against you as a lecturer. It's about*

[57] The first year Experience (FYE) comprises constant tracking of students and modules for early intervention in the event of identified risk, as well as the extensive tutor system, the academic referral system for psychological and academic counselling, reading and writing support, a sophisticated learning platform and state-of-the-art applications to maximise the accessibility of learning materials, student support and information exchange.

being on par with the norm. So lecturers put themselves under pressure to try and meet the standards.

The above extract raises two important points: Firstly, pressure for high throughput rate comes from university management through the Deans' offices. If the throughput rate drops beyond the stipulated cut-off level, lecturers are taken to task. Secondly, Janet spoke as a departmental manager as opposed to her capacity as an academic, and insisted that she does not put her staff under pressure although she does so inadvertently by maintaining that if one obtains below average pass rates, questions will be raised about the lecturer. This implies that pressure is subtly directed to the lecturer and not to the students. These factors mount the pressure and the fact that lectures have to write reports is a way of instilling compliance. Janet down-played the pressure, pointing out that their department offered students the opportunity to write exams several times until they passed; a practice which could compromise quality:

Unlike other departments, we give our students three to four chances to write assignments and tests. So we say those who failed test one, are given a chance to write test two or even test three. So at the end of the semester we usually have a high throughput rate.

What is important to note is that the focus on the success rate is misleading because this is not necessarily a learning outcome. This is particularly true if we consider that the students cram content in order to pass. Besides, basing learning outcomes on a number is a narrow outcome target; a normative approach to education would look at multi-dimensional learning.

Although the retaking of examinations can have a positive effect on learning, this practice also raises a number of questions, for example, 'How many times can a student retake an exam?' and 'How will the final grade be assigned'? Though this is deemed a good method for raising the throughput rate, the process arguably undermines the quality of graduate being produced. If students are allowed to retake exams, this might mean that they are less motivated to work hard at the first attempt, thus cultivating a lackadaisical approach to preparation. Furthermore, this practice implies that students in the same class are not assessed through the same examination; some have more time to prepare for examinations compared to others. While it remains important for exams to be rewritten under special circumstances or for students to have access to re-evaluations, lecturers should take a proactive approach in preparing students and improving the skills of the weaker students as opposed to merely allowing re-examinations in order to strengthen the pass rate. This ultimately undermines the freedoms of the lecturers and limits the skills, functionings and values developed in students.

Secondly, the interviews also revealed that lecturers struggle with student quality-related constraints such as the ability to write, absenteeism and lack of interest in their academic work. Lecturers reported that students lacked basic writing skills, even at second and third year levels. John expressed this concern as follows:

> *When you see the written work of some of the students, you begin to question whether the students actually passed (the matric). You will be hard pressed to find one sentence that is grammatically correct in an essay.*

Others suggested that poor writing skills could be attributed to the fact that the students do not make use of the library and hence do not read widely:

> *I usually say read… read…but literally they don't read. I had a set of students who actually didn't know where the library is. I mean of course we have online journals, but in my opinion the library is the first thing that a student needs to locate.* (Abby)

As mentioned previously, this can also be attributed to the students' background where most of them come from families where English is not even their second language, meaning that they only use English in class. Furthermore, most of the students completed their primary and secondary education in another local language, meaning that their first serious encounter with English is at university level. Their poor schooling backgrounds affect their reading culture, ability to write competently and their overall language skills.

Another perceived constraint by lecturers is the fact that since lectures are not compulsory, students do not come to class regularly and along with their language limitations they do not engage much during the lectures. The lecturers have initiated discussions to introduce a class register as a way of improving attendance, while enhancing learning outcomes. Additionally, Abby suggested that certain students were shy to participate in crowded classes:

> *We can't force students to come to class and it's sad that they lose so much. There is no substitute for class attendance. And on top of that they seem shy to participate in these crowded classes.*

There is a lot that lecturers can do about the curriculum and for students to experience learning that they have reason to value, but students must also play their part and be studious. Efforts from the side of the lecturers alone are insufficient for improving students' learning experiences.

Thirdly, lack of resources, also emerged as a major problem, particularly inadequate numbers of textbooks with relevant content and knowledge of the Global South. The DoS has been

proactive about this situation and has moved towards using a textbook which is Africa-focussed and accessible. The textbook has been designed specifically for the South African context and it ensures continuity over the undergraduate period:

> *We have held conversations around the kind of textbooks that we use, and how relevant they are to the South African context. Taking into consideration the history of sociology, it's not unique that our curriculum tended to be Eurocentric. But we have since moved towards creating space for African stories. This year (2015) we have introduced this new textbook entitled 'Sociology: A South African Introduction*[58]*'. It's being used by our first years and it's a recent book written specifically for South Africa.* (Trace)

However, Mary regarded the use of this one (prescribed) book as a constraint as lecturers all prescribed readings from the same source:

> *Although we are not limited to prescribing from that single text, I see that as a constraint in terms of what to prescribe. The fact that we are encouraged to use it leads to the risk of limiting ourselves to that basic text. We understand that students are struggling and we don't ask them to buy, for instance, four textbooks costing say about R800 or R1, 000 each. So it's quite a difficult situation.*

Although the book provides sound South African examples, it does not totally exclude the theories of the early classical sociologists. For example, a review of the 'Religion, Deviance and Crime' module revealed that the base of this course comprises the theories of the early classical sociologists. The advantage of using this book is that the lecturers are still teaching the same themes, whereas the new text contains narratives that are more strongly focussed on Africa. Following this shift, the DoS was engaged in discussions on how to decolonise the curriculum to cater for diverse students as the university is experiencing an increase in diversity in terms of its student profile. Trace commented:

> *Even though we use the Zaaiman book which provides nice South African examples, the base is still of those early classical sociologists. We are beginning to talk about how we position ourselves around decolonising the curriculum. We have space as individual lecturers to add other things that are relevant to what we will be teaching. For example, I teach race, so the space is available to think about using other authors.*

A fourth constraint which emerged from the interviews was related to lecturer workload regarding class size and other administrative demands. Due to heavy workloads in terms of student numbers, test and exam scripts to mark and other academic and administrative

[58] 'Sociology: A South African Introduction' is a South African book that provides a comprehensive introduction to the sociological theories and themes commonly taught in first year and undergraduate courses. The book was edited by Paul Stewart and Johan Zaaiman and was produced in 2013.

responsibilities, the lecturers reported that there was insufficient time to engage with all students as they would have wanted. Abby's remarks about this are instructive:

> *One of the reasons we don't have enough time is because of the large classes and the general efficiency drive in higher education. You know my professors at Amsterdam will complain that there is so much to do during weekend when they have 30 transcripts to mark. At times I mark over 300 scripts in one weekend. We usually don't have weekends, we just work. It's a big problem […] but yes I wish if lecturers could have more time to concentrate on improving modules.*

The interviews reinforce the idea that lecturers are not only faced with the pressure to achieve high throughput rates but also have to face the reality of dealing with a rapidly increasing student intake rate (Table 7.3), while the number of lecturers remains static. Concerns about workload pressure around the publishing of research were also reported. IU aspires to be a research and teaching university and lecturers are involved in research. Janet outlined the research output in the department over a three-year period (2013-2015)[59] to provide a broader picture of the calibre of lecturers in the department. During this period, the DoS had 4 staff vacancies that were only filled in 2014. This meant that the staff members that were primarily involved with teaching and research were reduced in 2013 and partially in 2014, with Janet expecting an improvement in production over the next few years. The 2014 international research output in terms of book chapters and peer reviewed articles was higher than the South African average (Table 7.9). Two books were published in South Africa while one was produced internationally. Janet commented:

> *We don't teach only. As academics we must publish and that is how we are rated. So the pressure to publish exists.* (Janet)

Table 7.9: DoS accredited research output

Research output	Year	Published in South Africa	Internationally accredited journals/publishers
Books published	2013-2015	2	1
Book chapters	2013-2015	4	11
Peer reviewed articles	2013-2015	14	21

As the workload increased, it seemed that curriculum-related issues were not granted the attention they deserved. The lecturers are expected to teach students, conduct their own

[59] Note that the research output includes publications by Research Associates of the IU.

research and publish at least one article per year. While the lecturers are enthusiastic, the workload is heavy and this undermines the quality of the graduates. The focus appeared to be more on meeting teaching deadlines and throughput targets and less on developing the necessary functionings and human values such as critical thinking and good citizenry.

In spite of the prevailing constraints lecturers indicated that they are doing their best in transmitting knowledge under the present circumstances:

> *The quality is okay; we are pulling them through quantitative assignments which are so difficult. If we were just making them do qualitative projects, that would have been easier.* (Janet)

Abby, who was enrolled for her PhD at the time of the interview, reflected on the level of education offered at IU in relation to the education offered at a university she attended in the Netherlands. Abby indicated that the quality of education offered by her IU department was better than that offered at her overseas university. She commented:

> *I am a student registered in Amsterdam and in our PhD class they teach us (some) content that we teach to our sociology students in second year. I couldn't believe it. I was like …oh I am teaching my students even better things than what these people are teaching at that level. I think that is fantastic and that means we can compete with any department in the world, that is one thing which I think puts us at a great level. We engage in very serious topics such as inequality, discrimination and poverty. These are very important topics not just in South Africa. When I teach in the Netherlands they cannot grasp inequality, they don't get it. When I speak about racial and ethnic differences, they don't get it but my first year students do, and I think it's not just because of growing up in South Africa. It's because of the reading material that we give them. So I feel we are really up there and I am not just saying this because I have been working here my whole life.*

Although Mary concurred that the DoS offered quality education, she highlighted that there were other factors that affected the quality of graduates produced:

> *I am satisfied with the quality of the degree but I think race, gender or social class affects the quality of a degree that a student takes or the success rate. I would say as lecturers we don't only look at what has been taught at this department but what is being taught in other departments. We need to know what others are doing to make that judgmental goal. So I think at undergraduate level we enrol very different students as compared to other universities. Some take the cream, so they have a different starting point from us. So at the undergraduate level, given the existing context of inequality in South Africa, I am satisfied with the degree quality.*

The lecturers reiterated the fact that white students, Indians and a few black students who came from middle and upper socio-economic classes performed academically better than the rest of students who were from working class backgrounds. The lecturers explained that the academic performance was closely linked to the type of secondary school attended:

> *There are now more black students enrolled. If you look at the success rate or levels, you still see that it's white and Indian students who constitute our top students. I think this has something to do with their backgrounds. Black students come from poor backgrounds, so they struggle to buy textbooks. They choose certain lectures to attend. They have social problems at home as well. I am not generalising that most of the students from say Soweto*[60] *come from poor backgrounds because there are other parts of Soweto that are actually affluent and we also have white students who belong to the working class but most are middle class so they can afford most of the things.* (John)

Sociology is a subject taken by a diverse range of students across axes of race, gender and schooling background. This implies that these students bring certain resource 'bundles' (known as conversion factors in capabilities theory) to their higher education experience, such as family support and so on. As a result, some students will have thicker 'bundles' than others, meaning that they will perform differently to those with 'thinner' bundles.

Even though lecturers valued students' ability to provide feedback on learning, they raised concerns that students did not always provide constructive criticism and feedback:

> *The comments I always get from students' evaluation forms are about limiting the scope (work) as much as possible.* (Mary)

> *We need to do that (get students to complete forms), it's a very daunting process; students will send you some very nasty remarks.* (Thomas)

Although a student evaluation form is useful in capturing student expectations, the exercise is not compulsory as lecturers determine whether they want to carry it out or not. However, university management structures act on the findings of these evaluations and consider the results when promoting staff members.

This section has highlighted certain constraints that lecturers face during the course of their work. Overall, the lecturers were found to be satisfied with the quality of the graduates they were producing in the department. However, there are definite constraints which pose as stumbling blocks in the performance of their task. Some of the constraints identified by lecturers included: i) Institutionally related constraints; ii) Quality related constraints; iii)

[60] Soweto is a township of the city of Johannesburg in Gauteng, South Africa.

Resource related constraints; and iv) Lecturer workload constraints. These constraints are intertwined and they overlap, severely reducing lecturer flexibility and availability to engage with students on a more frequent basis. Whilst the sense of taking action on things that they value exists, lecturers' agency is also constrained. In the next section I summarise and tease out capabilities approach implications, extrapolating valuable functionings, that is, agency functionings and conversion factors.

7.10 Opportunities, capabilities and functionings that matter

If we consider the empirical data, what can be deduced is that lecturers valued certain important functionings for sociologists, such as critical thinking, adopting multiple perspectives, imaginative thinking, ability to carry out research, and the ability to write in an academically acceptable manner. There is evidence of a strong attempt that has been made to develop these functionings through theoretical paradigms, the use of essay questions, debates, discussions and writing assistance through the establishment of a centre for this explicit purpose. Whilst all the lecturers valued critical thinking, for example, the interviews revealed contradictory responses on whether the DoS was producing critical thinkers. The lecturers valued the capability for employment and they introduced a 'Clinical Sociology' module which they argued prepared students for the world of work.

In the design of the curriculum, lecturers valued communication, coordination, and working together with colleagues. This allowed junior academics to learn from their more experienced (experts) colleagues. The relations of lecturers were cemented through team building exercises initiated by the department. Other activities that lecturers valued included student input, searching for current issues on the internet, and looking at what other universities were offering. Information on courses, on the purpose of programmes and learning outcomes were available in the FoH handbook and on their website. However, the curriculum for the sociology major was predetermined, thus limiting student agency and choice. Table 7.10 presents a list of the capabilities extrapolated from the interviews.

Table 7.10:Capabilities extrapolated from interviews with IU lecturers	
Capabilities	**Clear examples drawn from the chapter and by the lecturer who listed the capability**
i) Critical thinking	*We are looking for that voice, we ask them what they think about an issue, whether they agree or not, and they should give the reasons to support what they say. We teach them to play the devil's advocate to say, 'How would this be if we consider a b c…?'* (Thomas)
ii) Sociological knowledge/imagination	Listed by all lecturers.
iii) Complex multiple perspectives	*By exposing them to different theoretical paradigms [….]. The paradigms can be radical, conventional or neutral but at the end of the day the onus is on the students to then decide for themselves which paradigm they would use when faced with a particular issue. Each paradigm allows a person to use a different lens to analyse a given situation.* (Abby)
iv) Research-focussed graduate	*We want skilled graduates, who are confident to carry out research, with good analytical thinking to market themselves out there. We want professional graduates, we are looking at skills citizenry and we are trying to build black intellectuals specifically.* (Mary)
v) Ability to write	Listed by three lecturers.
vi) Employment opportunities	*I have carried out research on the kind of jobs that sociology graduates get in South Africa and I have seen that young people need education that responds to employment requirements. I found out that a person who knows and who can apply mixed research methods has a competitive advantage in the job market.* (Abby)

To recapitulate, pedagogically, lecturers were revealed to value the discussion format in content delivery. Knowledge is also transmitted through case studies and visual methods to make abstract ideas more accessible. The stumbling blocks to the good intentions emerged as constraints involving large student numbers, the pressure to maintain high throughput rates, student absenteeism, students' thin knowledge base, and limited resources. While all the lecturers agreed that awarding higher or false passing scores to undeserving students was wrong, there is little to no evidence to suggest that they did anything about this. Overall, lecturers reported having a sound understanding of who their students were. However, the reconfiguration of curriculum and pedagogy seemed to neglect factors such as prior education level, financial background and former life experiences of disadvantaged students. Students were largely regarded as a homogeneous group, meaning that the same teaching methods were applied to all. The next chapter presents IU student views about the curriculum.

Chapter 8: Inclusive University student perspectives

"Education is the kindling of a flame, not the filling of a vessel." (Socrates 1892)

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored lecturer perspectives on the development of the sociology curriculum at IU. Four common issues that emerged from the data were as follows: i) It was not clear whether the sociology curriculum offered at IU was influenced by any common theoretical underpinnings; ii) Lecturers valued important functionings for sociologists such as critical thinking, adopting multiple perspectives, sociologically imaginative thinking, ability to conduct research, and the ability to write academically; iii) The pedagogical arrangements rely more heavily on technological methods than on personal contact; and iv) Lecturers faced systemic constraints such as institutionally related constraints, and quality related constraints. This chapter now considers IU students' experience with and perspectives on the IU curriculum to determine how curricular knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contributes to the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world. The chapter further looks at what functionings, as a proxy for capabilities, students have reason to value through their studying for a sociology degree. The outline of student perceptions is presented in the following order: access and success in university and degree programmes, student experiences and valued functionings, student employability, student involvement, pedagogical relationships, and opportunities and functionings that matter.

The next section presents student perceptions and experiences while highlighting the student voices deemed most illuminating in the research findings collected and analysed.

8.2 Access and success at university and in degree programmes

The three findings that emerged from the interviews are that:

i) Students were pleased to be enrolled at IU for several reasons that included but were not limited to the reputation of the university and the tuition structure,

ii) Students found information about IU on the website, and that

iii) Students enrolled in the FoH by default, yet they had high admission scores.

Students expressed satisfaction with their choice of university and expressed being happy to be at IU. Overall academic reputation of the institution was found to be a key factor in the decision to enrol at IU. Ray commented as follows:

I am happy to have the privilege to learn at this university. I think it is one of the best in the country.

What emerged is that students considered the reputation of the institution and not the reputation of the department or degree that they had elected to study. The interviewed students expressed feeling proud to be students of IU and frequently used the term *'we'* and '*among the best'* to refer to IU, denoting a sense of belonging:

*I enrolled at IU because I believe it is good, affordable, and is rated among the best I proud to be a student at IU. (*Ruth)

I chose IU because it is one of the best and affordable institutes. I researched about it and felt that it could allow me to grow and achieve a lot of things. (Ray)

The cost of education was mentioned as another important factor, with ample substantiation for the view that IU is indeed one of the cheapest among the top universities in South Africa. A scan of tuition fees at South African universities revealed that in 2016, the average cost per annum for a Bachelor of Arts degree at IU was estimated at between R30, 000 and R36, 000, whereas at EU the cost of the Bachelor of Social Science (Human and Societal Dynamics) degree was estimated at R27, 000, and another leading university's Bachelor of Arts degree was estimated at between R33, 000 and R44, 000. The tuition fee at IU was slightly higher than the tuition at EU but was cheaper than that of a leading university.

Students reported feeling that the levels of social and personal inclusion were high at IU. Ruth pointed out that students could interact with others freely in and out of class, mentioning that chose IU because of the diversity of its student body:

The student body is diverse as compared to other institutions in South Africa where there are more white or black people. Here we have both black and white people. Even participation in class is not a problem.

Two students indicated that they found information about the university on the website and were impressed by the physical appearance. These perceptions are illustrated below:

I googled universities in South Africa and IU is among the best. I wanted to attend a good university. What further attracted me were the physical structures, the green lawn, and the pictures of students that were on the website. I got an impression that IU is a friendly university and I liked the outlook. It's a good university. (Rejoice)

One of the reasons cited for choosing and enrolling at IU was its physical location in a city. Two students reported having moved away from their home towns and home provinces, for

example, one student came from Limpopo and another one from Mpumalanga and were enthusiastic about experiencing life in a big city and taking care of themselves. Thus, living and studying in another city afforded students the opportunity to increase their autonomy:

> *I also wanted to be away from my home (province) and my home town. I was tired of my place and wanted to move to a bigger city where opportunities seemed plenty from the outside.* (Rejoice)

Keith commented:

> *I decided to go to IU because it was far away from home, it was not my first choice but when I got the acceptance letter I just asked myself why not, let me just go.*

This excerpt suggests a sense of risk taking and confidence compared to students who want to stay close to home. However, the students reported that they did not consider other important factors such as the course content, graduate attributes or graduate employment rates when choosing where to study; a method of decision making that could well lead them to the wrong institution.

Unlike students at EU, parental influence on university and degree programme selection emerged as being less prominent. Ruth wanted to be near home for financial reasons:

> *I didn't want to leave this province. Staying at home whilst I attend university cut costs, especially accommodation costs. After all, some of the good universities are all here (province).*

As with EU students, the interviews confirmed that first-generation students lack social capital as a factor in assisting them to decide on the type of degree programmes to enrol for. The also do not have enough money for multiple applications. Four students reported feeling uncertain about which subjects to take and there were conflicting perspectives as to why they chose the Bachelor of Arts degree and the sociology major in particular. Four students who had enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts degree were not quite sure of what they wanted to study upon registration ended up taking the sociology major by default. Rejoice's first choice was social work but the selection process was competitive and she failed to secure a place:

> *I passed so well such that when I was applying for varsity I wanted to study social work. My matriculation points were above 30, but they wanted something like 33. The competition for social work was stiff and I couldn't make it and was told I could enrol for a Bachelor of Arts degree. In fact, they looked at my matric grades and they recommended the Bachelor of Arts degree and I took sociology and psychology during first year. I thought I would be a psychologist but later I liked sociology. At first, I didn't have a clue*

about what sociology is all about. But one lecturer came and explained that sociology is a subject concerned with human interactions and how structures impact the individual and society, giving reasons to what we do in terms of culture. He went on and on and on I liked it.

The data reveals that students initially had no intention of enrolling for the Bachelor of Arts degree. Ruth, a first-generation student, lacked understanding of enrolment processes and what the different degrees entailed. She had high matriculation grades but did not have enough financial or academic support for her to choose a degree, resulting in the recruiting officers selecting a degree programme on the basis of her grades. She did not possess any information with which to negotiate or voice her interests:

When I came here I wasn't sure about the degree that I wanted and nobody prepared me for university. It is overwhelming especially when you are not sure of what you want to study. All I knew was that it would be in the arts and when I presented the matric results slip, the person in the registry looked at it and said I qualified for the Bachelor of Arts programme. I did not choose, they chose for me when I was registering and I couldn't say no because I didn't know anything. I also wanted to go to other faculties but the subjects that I passed at high school limited me. I didn't pass physical science and pure sciences, so I couldn't go to other faculties. (Ruth)

However, Ruth was intrinsically motivated and eager to further her studies. She posited the view that higher education is a weapon with which to alter life situations:

I come from the township and I wanted to do this (studying) against all odds. I want to do it for myself and I want to do it for my mother. Through this (education), I want to uplift our situation (from poverty).

However, there were few students who enrolled for the specific programme intentionally. Keith and Ray had obtained high matriculation grades and qualified for admission to other faculties but enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts degree and elected the sociology major because it was responsive to what they wanted. For them, it was a matter of following personal interests in their scholarly pursuits as they had not been influenced by anyone in selecting a degree programme. Keith explained:

My choosing of the degree and university was purely my decision. I wasn't influenced by anyone in any way. I had high marks in both sociology and psychology but I decided to undertake studies in sociology because it speaks to me and I knew that I belonged to the humanities and social sciences. I believe that one should have a postgraduate qualification for things to work better. I have always wanted to further my studies and be somewhere in life. I could not afford to stay at home or look for a job that I'll always

complain about for the whole of my life. I choose sociology because it was one of the requirements that I needed to take an extra elective, but after first year I found it to be more interesting. It made me rethink about things that I thought were just normal in our everyday life. So I took it till final year and at postgraduate level.

As mentioned above, while the majority of students ended up in sociology by default, a few had deliberately enrolled for the Bachelor of Arts degree. The range of different perspectives on this matter points to the prevalence of both pull and push factors. The data indicates that university factors such as its reputation, the tuition structure, and information on the website influenced the decision to enrol. However, while the students were not quite sure about what specific major to follow or ended up in sociology by default, those who did not begin with sociology in mind had no regrets about their ultimate degree choice. As they progressed, all the students reported enjoying the content of the degree and particularly sociology. The students who had moved away from their home towns seemed to exhibit greater confidence than those who decided to stay at home. The next section looks at students' experiences and valued functionings.

8.3 Student experiences and valued functionings

This section begins by looking at the knowledge students acquired as a result of studying sociology. It also focusses on the skills developed, what they reported liking most about the curriculum, course evaluations and what they felt they had become as a result of studying sociology. The discussions also describe the broad and emancipatory role of the curriculum in expanding student understandings.

The students made it clear that they valued the attainment of knowledge and skills. Positive comments about the majority of the courses were highlighted and four students were able to give practical examples of the value of knowledge. Students reported having acquired valuable knowledge from their various courses. Ray provided examples of the usefulness of the 'Population and Dynamics' module and further highlighted the value of 'Religion, Deviance and Crime' as a module in itself:

In 'Population Dynamics' I learned contested issues of gender and the devastating effects of HIV and AIDS, issues of migration, and its impact on the South African economy. In 'Religion, Deviance and Crime', we discussed the high crime rate in South Africa, the forces fuelling it and how we can start thinking about curbing it.

Ruth appreciated the implicit value of sociological theories and concepts:

Studying sociology has indeed given me valuable insights into social factors. I will not be telling the truth if I said that what I have learned is not important. I personally learned about the interaction of individuals in society, the social challenges we face, the sociological theories, deviance behaviour, demography among others. The sociological lens affords me the chance to understand the world's activities in a different way.

Keith concurred with this sentiment by saying that:

The undergraduate degree covered a lot of topics. I remember that during my first year we were taught about the three fathers of sociology (Weber, Comte and Durkheim) and their contribution to the shaping of sociology. Then we went to cover group dynamics, globalisation, research skills, family and many other things. The curriculum was interesting but not easy at all.

Rejoice elaborated as follows:

We were introduced to contemporary theories, 'Group Dynamics', and 'Population Studies' amongst others. I am big fan of Marx who criticises capitalism and the other theories are equally important as they allow me to view situations critically.

The students appreciated that sociological theories introduced them to a plurality of (sociological) perspectives about the world. Sociology allowed them to make sense of things that they did not understand and to give meaning to societal observations. This can be illustrated by Keith's analysis of the abuse of Nyaope[61]. He emphasised the need for the community to be proactive about the problems they faced:

A society is like one big machine with different parts that work interchangeably. I learned that some things happen contextually, and in order to understand what is happening then you need to critically assess the society. These days when I go back home I try to find out, for example, why there is an increase in the use of Nyaope. I try to answer such critical questions, for example that: is it because of the lack of education among the youths, the high unemployment rate, lack of social activities, or is the slow development we are experiencing in the area playing a role in the use of drugs? We must not just condemn the youths but we must think of ways to solve the problems. (Keith)

As a result of studying different sociological theories and concepts, students acquired skills and functionings that their lecturers indicated as being of importance for sociological understanding. As is the case with EU, the three most commonly mentioned functionings constituted the ability to think critically, to adopt multiple perspectives on different situations, and to engage in sociological imagination. All the students concurred that the study of sociology had caused them to see things in an entirely different way. The other skills and

[61] Nyaope is a drug made from a mixture of third grade heroin, rat poison, cleaning detergents, and sometimes HIV antiretroviral medication, and is widely used by township youths (Ratlebjane 2016).

functionings that were mentioned by students included the ability to conduct research and interpret complex issues, as well as to write academically. For example Keith emphasised that sociology allowed him to think critically:

> *Honestly, sociology taught me to think critically, not to accept things at face value, and to always ask the 'why, how and what' questions. It made me question the norms, the daily behaviour, and made me more curious about things. I now respect academic research because of sociology [….] there is always something between the lines that can be researched. It met my expectations and helped me to improve the way I handle situations. For example, it taught me how to view and handle racism. That is so relevant in our rainbow nation. The hatred is still alive and such dialogue still needs to continue. My political position as a black, young South African man is that I have to become a better person, and that is all shaped by what I have learned in sociology.*

Rejoice reported having acquired the skill of being able to examine a situation from different angles. She pointed out that sociology had informed and empowered her with the necessary knowledge and skills to appraise situations more objectively and embrace diversity. For example, it allowed her to explore and understand the concept of xenophobia:

> *Before I studied sociological theories I didn't realise wrong things that were happening in our community, for example, the dangers of engaging in early sexual debut, and statutory rape. I am a township girl and believe me that it will be rare to walk in the community for ten minutes without seeing a pregnant girl (with unwanted pregnancy). Because of this, I started asking myself a lot of questions such as: Are parents to blame? Is it our community or the law enforcement agents? I wanted to understand the contributing factors to the problems and find ways of putting that to an end. I started asking tough questions and approaching situations from different angles.*

She provided another example:

> *I don't have to look at a situation and conclude; I have to look beyond the closed doors. What I liked most were modules that touched on demography, migration, and population studies. Sociology opens the eyes, for instance I am informed and would not support xenophobia. We are all Africans and there is no need to hate and fight each other.* (Rejoice)

However the quality of empathy was indirectly referred to through examples. Two students made reference to how empathetic they had become, with Ray commenting:

> *I am one person who enjoys asking questions about why certain things occur. Sociology has made me become this understanding person. It allowed me to put myself in other people's shoes.*

Similar to EU, these findings suggest that students had acquired functionings that enable them to think critically and imaginatively about society and social issues.

One of the things that students can acquire from studying sociology is being able to act independently and to make their own choices. The data showed that the students exercised their agency to a certain extent, for example, they went against certain stereotypes. For example, Rejoice commented that she had always wanted to be positive and did things that were important to her without being intimidated. She challenged people who were supporting xenophobia without fear, and she also made reference to how young people should view and approach unemployment:

> *During my first year I cannot say I experienced that (being able to act). I was just experiencing varsity life. In my second year sociology taught me to toughen up although I was a cry baby. It taught me to act and stand up for things I believe without being intimidated. At one point I volunteered with a non-governmental organisation and we visited schools where we were educating and challenging students on the concept of xenophobia, how we all need to live well, and co-exist with foreigners. I volunteered because I was convinced it was the right thing to do ….]. As you might be aware, unemployment is high in South Africa but I don't agree with the approach of just sitting, complaining, and moaning. I always ask myself what we, as the youths, are doing about it. We must be proactive instead of shifting blame, for example, onto foreigners. That's being a coward.* (Rejoice)

Prudence provided an opinion about gender equality between men and women, going on to explain the importance of respecting women equally at home and at the work place:

> *We live in a patriarchal society where men's dominance has been reinforced at home and in the workplace. I choose to resist that. At home women must equally have rights and be respected. As women we should also get better education, we should occupy managerial positions at work because we are also capable. Women should not just listen to men but we must be equal partners in every sense. I stand for that and I am about to finish my honours degree and I expect my partner treat me with the respect that I deserve.*

The extracts reveal that the students felt that they had become better people in terms of becoming initiators of things that they valued and also in terms of understanding gender equality. What also became apparent is that students gained a sense of volition concerning things that they valued doing or being. The students felt confident enough to voice their concerns after the first year. This can be attributed to the adjustments made by students to meet the social and academic demands of the university. Keith commented:

It helped me to understand my position everywhere I am. I remember when I worked for Liberty Life[62] *I managed to participate within a group and understood the group dynamics. Cohesion was one of my strengths as I was able to predict the outcome. I also manage to avoid group things and social loafing. I also stood my ground on things that I believed in.*

Keith raised a further conflicting view that during the first three years of undergraduate study, his grasping of subject matter and skills development had remained minimal. The student drew the conclusion by comparing learning experiences at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. He argued that at undergraduate level they were introduced to many courses without delving deeper into the study material, as compared to honours level where there are fewer courses with greater depth. He further pointed out that after going through the honours programme, he could confidently say that he could analyse, interpret, think critically and was in a position to exercise his agency:

I wouldn't say that there is an impact during the first three years. If this interview was conducted before I enrolled for the honours degree I would have probably said yes we learned a lot. That would have been true at that stage. But after attending this honours programme, I feel like I really began to learn this year. We are digging deeper; the absorption rate is higher because we are heavily involved in the learning through presentations. The concepts we learn seem to be new all of a sudden. The difference is that I can wake up in the middle of the night and be able to explain most of the things that I am learning now. I can now safely say I can think critically and I am in a position to stand for things I believe in. (Keith)

There were reported instances where agency was exercised selectively, which I will illustrate using the prescribed curricula. Two students at IU were opposed to the fact that courses or curricula for the sociology major were prescribed. Similar to EU, lecturers were in charge of developing the curriculum while the students had no control or choice over the courses and the selection of content and knowledge to be included. Students were expected to conform and they did not like the fact that no electives were available to those taking the sociology major. Keith and Ray said that they would have welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the selection of courses while lecturers, as experts, could concentrate on deciding on the subject matter to be included in these. Put differently, there was no responsibility or indeed opportunity for students to participate in the development of the curriculum:

[62] Liberty Life is a major insurance company in South Africa.

I think it's best to ask us what we want in the curriculum. We are the beneficiaries of the curriculum and I am sure if it was explained to us I think we could have suggested one or two interesting courses. (Ray)

Keith also commented:

No there was no freedom to choose the courses. The department prescribed all the courses and that's it. We had no say in it and I think it's unfair.

When challenged about whether they had acted or done something about the prescribed curriculum, the students indicated that they had never thought about it. The interviews suggest that they lacked confidence about what they could propose and some thought that their actions were not going to make a difference:

The curriculum has been used for a long time and who am I to complain when everyone seems okay with it [……] but I know for sure that students went to ask lecturers why they were not awarded high marks. (Keith)

The interviews also suggest that the students exercised their agency for personal gains. An example is the effort made by students in speaking to lecturers when they were not satisfied with the marks they had been awarded. On the other hand, Ruth and Rejoice pointed out that having prescribed courses was helpful to them as they could not imagine selecting courses on their own, given the little knowledge they possessed about the discipline. Rejoice commented:

I choose elective courses from other disciplines, for example, I was able to pick courses from psychology. It was prescribed, which in a way I appreciated. For the sociology major, there wasn't any choice. The truth is that the majority of students do not know how to choose courses. Students were influenced by friends or lecturers or by the assumption of how easy it would be to pass a module. To be honest, I was content with what was available; after all it's IU (a good university).

Ray argued that lecturers should endeavour to learn about topics that are of interest to students:

[…] there are courses I wish I had taken like social work, 'Sociology of Communication' and 'Media Research and 'Journalism' but they were not part of the curriculum.

The students reported feeling confident that the teaching staff had compiled a comprehensive curriculum that offered the main theoretical and methodological traditions of sociology. Despite the limitations concerning the involvement of students in curriculum development, students identified courses that were important to them:

I intend to specialise in social policy and health related issues. The 'Clinical Sociology' course introduced me to the basics and practical ways to develop interventions, for example, in health settings. It's about change, active change and I am interested in understanding human social life and how we can make a difference. (Prudence)

While the students highlighted the courses that were important to them, they were concerned about the absence of African theories. They pointed out that there were many competent public intellectuals in Africa, yet their scholarly work was not producing theories that could influence international debates. They further argued that this was a contributing factor to the dearth of broader interventions and solutions to Africa's unique problems. Keith commented on students' limited exposure to African approaches:

The lack of African scholars was another problem I had and still have with the sociology curriculum. Although the Eurocentric theories can be applied in Africa, I feel that if we have our home-grown theories they can assist in unpacking some of the unique challenges that we face today. Why can't we have our own (three) fathers of African Sociology (laughs...).

The findings suggest that students had indeed developed a measure of agency to act on things they had reason to value. For example students engaged lecturers on issues to do with the awarding of grades (marks). Furthermore, students did not like the fact that they had not actively participated in identifying the prescribed core courses.

8.4 Employment opportunities

As was the case with EU, the main finding from this section is that the students were found to hold a human capital perspective with regards to the sociology degree. They valued issues of employment competitiveness and expressed their wish for the curriculum to equip them with such skills. As a result, students wanted to enrol for professional degrees with clear employment paths. They indicated that one of the aims of the curriculum should be to prepare students for the world of work, arguing that students' main aim for entering university in the twenty-first century is to secure qualifications in order to get better jobs. While the students valued knowledge intrinsically, they were found to value it equally so on extrinsic levels. They reported wanting to acquire skills that could help them to get jobs to improve their situations as well as that of their families. As a result, the students had high aspirations and were aiming to occupy influential positions in regional and international organisations:

I do not just want to get a degree. My aim is to grow intellectually, fulfil my dreams (…). Everything starts as a dream. I dream a good life, this means having a good job which offers a lot of money. I want to be a chairperson of a big organisation just like Nkosazana

Dlamini-Zuma[63]*; I want to be a philanthropist that's where I want to see myself. Maybe work for United Nations or some big international organisation.* (Rejoice)

However, the students highlighted that one of the weaknesses of sociology is that it is not a named degree[64] at the undergraduate level. They argued that chances of employment diminished as a result of the non-specialisation of the field:

Sociology students struggle to get employment because it is not known out there. The other thing that complicates the situation is that it is not a stand-alone degree and that also weakens the chances of employment. This can also be viewed as both a weakness and strength in that the qualification allows flexibility to choose a field that one wants, for instance, one can choose to work in the humanitarian sector or in research. (Keith)

On the other hand, it emerged that spreading the risk by taking courses from different disciplines acts as a springboard for entering these different fields. The students noted that students with a sociology major have a competitive edge over their competitors with liberal arts degrees in finding work in the humanitarian sector (non-governmental organisations). They also pointed out that sociology graduates have the advantage of being grounded in key social factors such as health, poverty alleviation and environmental issues. However, students again pointed out that the discipline is not known 'out there' and that the field has a professional identity problem:

The twenty-first century is about having a competitive edge. So if you have a general degree it's not going to help much in terms of employment opportunities, but at the same time it offers the chance to choose a track that one likes. There are no limits with a sociology major; it opens up a wide range of career paths. People must remember that it is not the degree that determines your future but how you use it. To some, it will be useful and to others useless. But I guess the basic point is that we need a strong base to lean on when looking for employment. (Ray)

The students also indicated that sociology is more of a theoretical discipline than an applied one and expressed the need for curriculum developers to consider incorporating practical and/or work-based training:

Sociology teaches things that are happening around us all the time and we can only succeed when they make things practical and simple. I also think that the curriculum needs to incorporate courses which are practical so that the discipline moves away from being a theoretical one to being practical, for example, having internships or work based

[63] Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma was the Chairperson of the African Union.
[64] IU does not offer a Bachelor of Sociology but offers a BA degree with a sociology major.

training. We, the students, must also be proactive and also volunteer. There are different fields that sociology speaks to, for example, research and public relations. (Keith)

What we can learn from the data is that whilst students value knowledge intrinsically, they demonstrated valuing education equally for its economic value. The suggestion by students that the curriculum should incorporate work-based training reveals that they think about securing their future. The data from this section and the valued functionings section suggests that students appreciate the tenets of both the human capabilities approach and HCT.

8.5 Pedagogical relationships

Three issues emerged from the data with regards to the way knowledge was transmitted: i) There were mixed student perceptions of the use of PowerPoint presentations; ii) Students valued discussions and engagements, which they did not always get; and iii) Lecturers were knowledgeable and approachable.

As far as pedagogic modes of delivery were concerned, the three methods that were commonly mentioned at IU were: i) PowerPoint; ii) Blackboard; and iii) Tutorials. Similar instructional teaching was reported and all the lecturers used these methods to deliver subject matter. All the students reported liking the PowerPoint presentations because lecturers here focussed on delivering key points in the limited time available and students could easily memorise the availed knowledge. Although the students liked PowerPoint, there were also mixed perceptions on how effective this was in developing their functionings. Those who preferred detailed PowerPoint presentations argued that it meant there was less reading for them. With such slides students reported that they merely memorised, reproduced the subject matter and passed the exams. Thus, to some extent knowledge consumption took place through memorisation and students were learning to reproduce facts. On the other hand, some students preferred less detailed PowerPoint slides, which would challenge them to read assigned texts and to develop functionings such as critical thinking. They argued that PowerPoint presentations were an ineffective way of delivering subject content, citing an example where they claimed that some of the lecturers simply read the PowerPoint slides to their students without elucidating the key points. Students reported finding this boring and they wondered why they attended lectures when the slides could just have been posted on Blackboard. Prudence commented about this as follows:

PowerPoint presentations were effective ways of teaching because they summarise things and they are easy to follow and understand.

Some students, like Keith, used this as a justification for skipping lectures:

> *Honestly, I was never the one to attend classes, but it all depended on the lecture. Some lecturers would come and read the slides just as they are and leave class. I stopped attending such lectures. Some lecturers made effort, they explained every bullet point in the slide and they would also ask questions in-between. That's being practical and it encourages dialogue. A lecturer must not behave like a chief who dictates what needs to be done by his people.*

This shows an element of agency; being proactive and approaching lecturers in order to get help as compared to waiting for the lecturer to approach the student.

Students were found to attach value to discussions, conversations and engagements although there were limited opportunities for this. The students did not like the absence of problem solving and active learning inquiry approaches (for example discussions and debates). They estimated that the ratio of engagement in class was between five and 15 percent. The students expressed a wish to have more discussions but they were also quick to point out that the undergraduate classes were large, hence making it difficult to engage. Keith echoed these sentiments by pointing out that:

> *Because the classes were big the lecturers just lectured and posed questions here and there. The discussions and debates were limited in class. But we understood the impracticability of this because we were so many. It's different now at postgraduate level because we are few, and presentations, debates and discussions are the order of the day.* (Keith)

The interviews revealed that students felt PowerPoint slides were a less effective teaching method, but the students did not do anything to raise this issue with lecturers. When asked if they acted to have teaching method improved, the students then pointed out that they still preferred them:

> *I cannot say they are not really effective. PowerPoint presentations are straight forward and easy to understand as they are summarised by lecturers. They provide a guideline but we must also read textbooks.* (Ray)

However, Rejoice reported enjoying the few class discussions which helped her develop the ability to listen, to present and to question authority. She explained:

> *The few discussions were very helpful as I learned how to speak in front of people, and I was in a position to ask questions to the lecturers. I enjoyed them because people raised different opinions and questions that were really helpful. The norm was that the lecturer*

would stand in front of class and will be lecturing for the greater part, say 80 to 90% whilst we will be listening. In discussions, it's about us as a class […] someone saying this and another saying that and we debated the ideas to reach a conclusion..…. We were many in the first year but the lecturer will come in class and say things we never imagined. We would sometimes have debates, for example, there was a debate on the growing population and the effects on food security. Some were arguing that there shall come a time when the number of people will surpass food available while others argued that as the population grows more food will be produced. I also remember the Marikana disaster debate; some people supported the strikers while others argued that the demands were unreasonable. The discussions were interesting and it was easy to remember things learned.

Even though the lecturers posed questions in between, the other students felt that the discussions and engagements were inadequate:

Although knowledge delivery was through PowerPoint, we had a few instances where we asked questions. There were not many but it was also our weakness that we didn't ask questions when the opportunity was given. I think it became routine that a lecturer would say, 'Any questions' and the students would respond by saying 'No questions', and the lecture will be over. (Rejoice)

It may be that memorising could assist in comprehension of sociological concepts but it might be found that it does not assist in developing important functionings such as critical thinking. Through memorising students may pass their examinations but will only possess a very thin knowledge base. PowerPoint presentations might also not adequately deal with the diversity of backgrounds as all students are treated equally and neither does it allow students to work in groups and learn. Attention is not really given to how knowledge is understood, how students are participating, and how diverse students absorb the knowledge.

The students accepted responsibility that they were not giving enough input in class to complement the PowerPoint presentations. Before each class students are assigned texts to read but Rejoice highlighted the fact that the students did not bother to read the texts ahead of time. In fact, the students did not like the extensive texts that were assigned even though the PowerPoint presentations tended to over-simplify key points. This suggests that the students were not adequately prepared for their classes and were thus unable to arrive at class with meaningful questions. Rejoice commented:

In my case, I did not read much during my first three years. I just relied on the slides or notes posted on Blackboard. I also did not like the fact that as an undergraduate student

we were expected to listen and write what is being said in class […] and there was no room to engage critically with all content. (Rejoice)

In contrast, in terms of skills, Ray highlighted that although the slides were helpful, they did not stop him from reading the assigned texts:

I enjoyed the lectures and some of the readings. There is too much to absorb during lectures and some of the concepts made more sense after going through the readings. To benefit much from the tutorials, it was advisable to read the prescribed texts before class. Although some of the texts were challenging, they raised intriguing issues and interesting controversies.

While there were a few students who recognised the limits of PowerPoint presentations and who indicated that they had read the assigned texts, most perspectives suggested that there was an over-reliance on slides. The majority of the students expected the slides to contain sufficient detail for understanding the subject matter. This places evaluation methods in the spotlight and I asked how lecturers were measuring student learning. Students were satisfied with the assessment methods used:

I think the evaluations were fine. They mixed short and long essay questions which encouraged us to think critically and reflect on issues. (Keith)

Students tended to over-rely on PowerPoint notes and some were reluctant to take down their own notes:

PowerPoint presentations are convenient but the problem is that we, as students, do not add the flesh. At undergraduate level we tended to rely on the slides only because of time limitations. When I was in the first year I relied on slides only and I never bothered to read other sources or textbooks. When I was doing my second year things changed when one lecturer came and said that he was going to stop giving us notes and that we had to write our own thereafter. I hated her because that meant a lot of work. At the end of the semester, my grades were low. (Ruth)

Prudence struggled to listen and take notes simultaneously:

There are times when you know that what the lecturer is saying is not included in the slides and you want to capture the notes but you can't do it whilst listening. You can't tell them to stop and repeat. I often felt helpless and the only alternative was to attend tutorials or to rely on Blackboard. That's how most of us survived.

Struggling to take notes suggests that students cannot adequately capture important explanations given during lectures. Although the students realised how important note-taking

is, they did not voice their difficulties to the lecturers. The problem here does not lie exclusively with the students but with the DoS, the faculty, and the university which assumes that students have equivalent abilities with which to master basic scholarly activities such as note-taking and also assumes that they all have the same cultural capital as advanced by Bourdieu (1986). Student learning abilities are different, thus calling for efforts to identify different student needs and how these individuals can be assisted.

In comparison with undergraduate classes, all the students agreed that the delivery of content was very good at the honours level. They indicated that the level of engagement and the discussion activity greatly improved due to the fact that classes were smaller[65]. These perceptions are illustrated in the comments made by Rejoice and Ruth:

> *At undergraduate level I would say 10% were discussions and at honours level we are a small number and we are always engaged in discussions. We are encouraged to participate in class and there is nowhere to hide, and it is a challenge to miss a lecture because you will lose out and besides the lecturer will take you to task.* (Rejoice)

> *Now, we as students are doing much of the research and presentations, whilst the lecturer guides and poses questions. We normally present in pairs and that means we have to research hard to present meaningful things*. (Ruth)

The data suggests that pedagogic approaches are being compromised by expansion and massification. Although the use of PowerPoint is convenient for large classes, the problem arises when students realise that they can pass exams without reading widely. They are not motivated to be studious and the disadvantage is that passing in this way does not secure acquisition of knowledge or the ability to ask carefully considered questions.

The majority of the lecturers were described as friendly, available and approachable. The other words used to describe the lecturers included energetic, humble, enthusiastic and knowledgeable. Keith explained that he had a good working relationship with most of the teaching staff. He was convinced that the lecturers were competent to do their job and the DoS was friendly:

> *The majority of the lecturers were approachable and friendly especially when you visit their offices. Most of them have an open door policy and one could easily make an appointment for help or explanations on anything. I assume they were employed because they know their stuff, and they showed interest in what they were teaching. It is also easy*

[65] The 2015 sociology honours class had 13 students.

to access the department; the front reception is always manned by a student who can be easily approached.

Prudence concurred that they came across as friendly, humble, and available for meaningful feedback:

Despite the fact that they are experts, lecturers make an effort to be friendly and humble […] you know there is always a bridge between lecturers and students. They are available but of course one has to make an appointment or visit them during their consultation period. When individually consulted, they gave detailed feedback.

Although Rejoice and Prudence agreed that the lecturers were friendly, they distinguished between the characteristics of older and younger lecturers. They expressed having a problem with older lecturers who they described as being boring, having little energy and seeming as if they wished they had already retired:

There is one lecturer who is old. I felt that she should retire to give young people a chance (to be employed). We could hardly hear her, and she never made that impact you know, and I can't even remember anything that she taught. I don't understand why old people are still here, their time is up. And I can't say to her, madam I don't like the way you teach, that's being disrespectful. The young lecturers know how best to put across the information using relevant examples. (Rejoice)

However, the other four students differed as they used words such as patient, knowledgeable and helpful to describe the same group of people. As one of these four, Keith voiced the following view:

The old lecturers are patient, knowledgeable and more helpful in the one–on-one sessions. Of course they are a little bit slow when they teach. You feel like they are fragile but wouldn't say that they must retire because some of them are experienced and are the epitome of knowledge.

What is common in the extracts is that young lecturers are said to be more energetic and more enthusiastic than their older co-workers. What also became clear is that the young lecturers are preferred because they have louder voices that can be heard clearly from all corners of a lecture room:

She was young, vibrant and had lots of energy. She spoke clearly, she was so clear that even those at the back of the class could hear her. She was passionate about her work. I felt like the lecturer knew what she was doing. The lecturer used to motivate us saying that if she could make it to class, why not us (students). (Ray)

A common thread running through the perspectives was that all the lecturers were knowledgeable, but that the students preferred young lecturers over the older ones. Apparently the older lecturers were the professors and senior lecturers, whilst the younger group comprised junior lecturers as well as senior lecturers. Both groups comprised of lecturers holding PhDs and these were black as well as white lecturers. There was little evidence to suggest that the perceptions were influenced by factors other than age. It might be that the effects of a generational gap were at play. The students spoke highly of tutors, who were young master's degree students. The students expressed confidence being able to interact with them and ask questions. The students also preferred tutorials because there were fewer people in the groups (a group averaged 25 students) and because the tutors provided simple, relevant and accessible examples:

> *I attended tutorials because they were compulsory. Besides, I liked them more because the classes were small and the tutors tried to attend to our different needs in a more informal manner. We could freely ask the tutors to explain things that we didn't understand in class. They are not intimidating and I didn't hesitate to ask silly questions.* (Keith)

One of the ways in which lecturers documented student concerns and suggestions on curriculum and pedagogy was through the completion of course evaluation forms. At the end of each module students completed these forms. This is a potentially valuable exercise which allows lecturers to refine or redefine their course modules and curriculum to meet the expectations of the students. Unfortunately, this exercise was not taken seriously by the students. Students indicated that their responses were not honest:

> *They do have those module evaluation forms which I think most students don't take seriously because they are too long. For some reason we ended up giving any answers just to finish. I would suggest that they find a sample of students and ask them to complete the forms to get authentic responses.* (Keith)

> *I never took the course evaluation exercise that seriously. In fact, I just completed the forms sometimes without even reading or understanding what they were all about. (*Ruth)

Another student indicated that they were sceptical about implementation of their recommendations. They did not get feedback on how the collected data had been used:

> *I try my level best to complete those evaluation forms but I had friends and many others who just complete them as if they were playing some games or creating some pattern. We are not well educated about the importance of this exercise and how serious we should*

take it. The other thing is that we are not given feedback on the improvements made because of our input. (Ray)

The students described above missed a valuable opportunity to give lecturers constructive feedback on how the content, pedagogy and even the skills that are important to them could be improved. This has implications for graduate attributes because the link between students' expectations and what the curriculum might actually be developing may be a mismatch.

Overall, the concern raised by the data is that students might be passing through university without acquiring the necessary skills for improving their analytical reasoning and critical thinking. As previously found at EU, while some of the students demonstrated an over-reliance on PowerPoint slides to pass their examinations, they seemed not to encourage the development of functionings such as critical thinking. In addition, students seem to have been treated as a homogeneous group and the teaching methods seemed to neglect that they possess different cultural capital, with this exercising an effect on how agency, functions, and hence capabilities are developed through curriculum and pedagogy.

8.6 Opportunities, capabilities and functionings that matter

Four outstanding issues that emerged from the data are that: i) The majority of the students were first-generation students who ended up in sociology by default; ii) The students valued knowledge that they received and they acquired some of the skills deemed important for sociologists such as critical thinking and having multiple perspectives; iii) Although there was evidence of agency development, it was mainly exercised in real life situations; and iv) Whilst lecturers were described as knowledgeable, friendly and approachable, pedagogical arrangements constrained the expansion of these capabilities.

The majority of students were first-generation students who required financial and academic support to navigate through the complex university system. The findings seem to indicate that the students did not receive sufficient academic support to make informed decisions about which area of study to enter. With the exception of Keith who made a free choice to enrol for the Bachelor of Arts degree, the majority of the students qualified to enrol in other departments but were not certain of which fields to pursue and consequently ended up studying towards the Bachelor of Arts degree by default. What we can learn from this case study is that first-generation students still require both financial and academic help to be able to make informed decisions when accessing university. Without proper guidance, as is the

case at UI, there is a risk that students who do not appreciate the sociology field might be recruited or students with an interest in sociology might miss the opportunity to be enrolled.

By and large, a wide range of functionings and capabilities are reported to have been expanded by the curriculum and by the pedagogic configuration at IU. The five most prominent functionings and hence capabilities valued were critical thinking, adopting multiple perspectives, being a sociologically imaginative thinker, employability and confidence. The students were able to illustrate the skills they had acquired by providing examples. Keith gave examples of how he had analysed the abuse of Nyaope, Ruth appreciated the sociological imagination gained, while Rejoice reported having acquired the ability to look at situations more objectively as well as how she learned to embrace diversity. Skills such as empathy and global citizenship were found to be the least common attributes acquired. There are three possible explanations for this: i) Less focus was given to the development of these skills and capabilities; ii) The intention to develop these skills and capabilities might have been there but could not be achieved due to constraints; and iii) Students possess different conversion factors, hence their achieved functionings also differ. Since IU recruits diverse students, the curricula should be sensitive to the different needs of the students, conversion factors such as educational performance, family background or even gender. If we take Rejoice as an example, she attended a good school and attained high matriculation grades; facts that give us an idea of her educational strength and how she can best be assisted academically.

Table 8.1 presents the capabilities that I extrapolated from the data. It is important to note that the list does not imply that all the students acquired all the listed capabilities, but gives an idea of the achieved capabilities that the students indicated they had acquired.

Table 8.1: Capabilities dimensions extrapolated from interviews with IU students

Capabilities	Clear examples drawn from chapter and who listed the capability
i) Critical thinking	*Honestly, sociology taught me to think critically, to not accept things at face value, to always ask the 'why, how and what' questions. It made me question the norms, the daily behaviour and made me more curious about things.* (Keith)
ii) Multiple perspectives	*These days when I go back home I try to find out, for example, why there is an increase in the use of Nyaope. I try to answer such critical questions, for example that: is it because of the lack of education among the youths, the high unemployment rate, lack of social activities, or is the slow development we are experiencing in the area playing a role in the use of drugs? We must not just condemn the youths but we must think of ways to solve the problems.* (Keith)
iii) Imaginative thinking	*The sociological lens affords me the chance to understand the world's activities in a different way. It allows me to give meanings to the not so obvious.* (Ruth)
iv) Economic opportunities	*I also think that the curriculum needs to incorporate courses which are practical so that the discipline moves away from being a theoretical one to being practical, for example, having internships and work based training. We, the students, must also be proactive and also volunteer. There are different fields that sociology speaks to, for example, research, and public relations.* (Keith)
v) Confidence	*It helped me to understand my position everywhere I am. I can now confidently read the situation and then act accordingly. I remember when I worked for Liberty Life I managed to participate within a group and understood the group dynamics. Cohesion was one of my strengths as I was able to predict the outcome. I also manage to avoid group things and social loafing. I also stood my ground on things that I believed in.* (Keith)
vi) Empathy	*Sociology has made me become this understanding person. It allowed me to put myself in people's shoes and understand why certain things happen.* (Ray)
vii) Global citizenship	*I personally learned about the interaction of individuals in society, the social challenges we face, the sociological theories, deviance behaviour, demography among others.* (Ruth)
viii) Aspirations	*Everything starts as a dream. I dream a good life, this means having a good job which offers a lot of money. I want to be a chairperson of big organisation just like Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, I want to be a philanthropist that's where I want see myself. Maybe work for United Nations or some big international organisation. Sociology equipped me for these kinds of challenges.* (Rejoice)

There were also things that the students valued that they did not receive, for example, theories deriving from Africa. Although IU had introduced a customised sociology book titled 'Sociology: A South African Introduction', the students argued that it contains no Africa-derived theories. The fact that students valued these means that there are things they deem important but which are not always at their disposal. In addition, students raised the concern that there were no elective courses for the sociology major. As a result, the students were expected to conform to the prescribed curriculum. The opportunity to inform the

curriculum and the freedom to choose courses was limited. This approach limited the formation and expansion of all students' real opportunities and freedoms to choose, as well as to do and become what they reasonably value. The opposite is also true that: even if there were courses that the students valued to study, the opportunity and freedom to suggest them was not availed. At this juncture lecturers and curriculum designers missed the chance to link the curriculum and students' expectations. As such, it can be argued that the curriculum was less just rather than more just in not including students' input in the design and development of the curriculum.

Through participating in the research for this thesis, students were granted an opportunity to exercise their agency. Rejoice reiterated that she could do things without being intimidated, for example, she reported having volunteered with an organisation that fought xenophobia. Prudence firmly believed in equality between men and women. It should be acknowledged that although these participants were active on matters that they valued, there were instances where they had identified problems and decided not to act. Contrasting examples involve cases where students engaged lecturers when they felt they deserved higher grades, or when the students did not raise their concern about the absence of elective courses with lecturers or the relevant administrative staff.

In terms of pedagogical arrangements, mixed perceptions were found to exist about the use of PowerPoint. What students in this study said they liked about PowerPoint may not always develop them academically, for example, memorising expedites understanding of sociological concepts, rather than fosters critical thinking. By memorising, students are given a false sense of security that they will pass the exams by reproducing notes given on the slides. Since the teaching is lecturer centred, neither lecturers nor students are acting as collaborators in the co-production of critical knowledge. This has implications for the development of skills such as communicating, critical thinking or developing problem solving skills as students passively receive subject matter. The other problem inherent in PowerPoint presentations is that it does not adequately deal with diversity in students' backgrounds as all students are treated in the same manner. The PowerPoint presentations do not allow students to work in groups as a pedagogical arrangement. Attention is not given to how knowledge is delivered and understood, how students are participating and how diverse students take up the knowledge. On an affirmative note, the lecturers were considered to be knowledgeable, approachable and friendly. However, older lecturers were looked down upon

by some students although they were professors with strong expertise; an attribute valued by the students and the department.

Chapter 9: Rethinking sociology curriculum from a capabilities approach perspective

> "There are obviously two educations. One should teach us how to make a living and the other how to live. Surely these should never be confused in the mind of any man who has the slightest inkling of what culture is. For most of us it is essential that we should make a living. In the complications of modern life and with our increased accumulation of knowledge, it doubtless helps greatly to compress some years of experience into far fewer years by studying for a particular trade or profession in an institution; but that fact should not blind us to another—namely, that in so doing we are learning a trade or a profession, but are not getting a liberal education as human beings". (Adams 1929: 169)

9.1 Introduction

In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 I presented students' and lecturers' experiences with, and perspectives on the sociology curriculum and pedagogy at EU and IU. In this chapter, different strands are pulled together. I reflect upon the research aims and objectives, the theoretical and methodological contributions made to the development of the sociology curriculum, as well as the implications. Firstly, the study focussed on the identification of capabilities dimensions that are valued by lecturers and students, and examined capabilities the students acquired, and how much they valued these capabilities. Secondly, with regards to curriculum knowledge, I discussed what student functionings were valued by sociology lecturers and how they operationalised these in constructing their curriculum. Thirdly, I examined the extent to which lecturer curriculum intentions were aligned with their pedagogical approaches. With regards to lives people can actually live, I interrogated students' narratives in order to identify curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students and how it contributes to or enhances their capabilities to live and act in the world. In so doing, I discussed the functionings and hence capabilities that students have reason to value through studying for a sociology degree. In terms of curriculum development, I examined how a capabilities lens contributes to the theoretical and practical development of sociology curriculum for undergraduates and higher education curriculum policy development. I first summarise the findings from the two case studies.

9.2 Summary of empirical data

Although this was not a comparative study, there are some nuances that emerged from the two cases that merit discussion.

To begin with, the Sociology Departments at EU and IU seemed to have no clear focus on human development. This is derived from the fact that both departments did not evidence a

clear thread holding the curriculum together, and in a manner that is related to the type of graduate that ought to be produced. However, main ideas in the human development approach, such as equity, are apparent in both case studies. Sustainability objectives were reported at IU which seemed to be more oriented towards social cohesion. Agency objectives such as well-being, participation, and empowerment were faint at both IU and EU. There was a significant effort to develop functionings such as critical thinking and having multiple perspectives. This could be also as a result of the discipline of sociology that advances critical discourse in general. Regarding valued capabilities, students and lecturers valued knowledge and critical thinking, with the students' having an emphasis on economic opportunities, the opportunity to provide or experience good teaching, autonomy and voice, resilience, and recognition, respect and belonging; however, there were limited opportunities it seemed for these.

Pedagogically, the data indicated that knowledge was transmitted mostly through lectures at both EU and IU. The lectures seemed more technologically oriented in terms of delivering the knowledge to students. Although lecturers seemed to know their students circumstances, students were largely treated as a homogeneous group. There was limited consideration of personal conversion factors such as personal biographies, talents or family income, that shape each student's freedom to achieve, as well as to understand the choices and values that convert these freedoms into actual achievements. The design of curriculum and pedagogy failed to account for these differences at both cases.

If we look at how the lecturers designed the curriculum, the findings suggest that there was more lecturer engagement and coordination at IU than EU. The engagement came through staff meetings, retreats for team building and the mentorship programme. In the mentorship programme, senior academics were paired with junior lecturers in designing and implementing the curriculum at IU, which appeared to be less the case at EU. This kind of a mentorship programme seemed to benefit junior lecturers who could learn from their seniors while getting the chance to discuss issues such as the sequencing and progression of modules. There seemed to be more consultation at IU than EU.

In addition, students highlighted that lecturers at IU were 'friendlier' than those at EU. The data suggest that there was a relationship between being friendly, greater student understanding, and good teaching. Thus good teaching was associated with characteristics such as being friendly and approachable at both universities. At EU, lecturers who were not

friendly were not popular with students. If we examine the experiences and qualifications of lecturers, we see that IU engaged more professors or more senior academic staff than EU. This does not imply that senior lecturers were better than junior lecturers but it does suggest academic leadership. On the other hand, a few students at IU raised the concern about older academics who, they alleged, lacked energy and enthusiasm. These students preferred to be taught by young lecturers.

With regards to student involvement in the design of curriculum, both departments fared poorly. The lecturers relied on student evaluation exercise to get students' input. However, students indicated that they did not take the exercise that seriously. There were no other meaningful alternatives to involve students in the design of the curriculum. The same applies to course selection, which was prescribed for those taking the sociology major at both case studies. Students had limited choices as the curriculum was predetermined. Students expressed disappointment that they could not take courses which they felt were important to them.

Students and lecturers reiterated that students need jobs after graduating. While sociology is seen as a discipline that provides general skills, most students and lecturers had a human capital perception of a sociology degree. They argued that, sociology, like any other university programme, should equip students with skills for employability and that the curriculum should integrate issues of employment in the curriculum. However, a minority felt that the sociology degree is not aimed towards any particular job, but rather on providing students with skills for them to be good citizens. If we compare the two case studies we see that IU provided students with better career options and graduate exit capabilities than EU.

Lastly, lecturers expressed mixed perceptions on the calibre of students that they recruited. With the exception of a few at IU, most lecturers argued that the students were 'weak' whilst a few of them indicated that they were products of a poor secondary school system. The majority of the students came from poor families and had enrolled for the sociology major by default. First-generation students lacked adequate information to make informed choices about university choices and degree programmes. Analysis reveals that Humanities departments are acting as access departments, where students from poor background gain access to higher education. However, this must not end with assisting them to access higher education only but help them also to access and experience good learning. For example, departments could consider expanding support interventions such as tutorials (offered at both

departments) to assist students in learning activities. IU has a First Year Experience approach, which is a transition and orientation programme conducted by Academic Development and Support (ADS)to assist students to adapt to college life and make their learning experiences easier. The FYE is a combination of curricular and co-curricular efforts across the whole institution aimed at improving success amongst first year students.

9.2.1 Restatement of theoretical approach

Turning now to the theoretical approach, the capabilities approach is a normative framework that proposes that social arrangements should be primarily evaluated according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value, their well-being and agency freedoms. My normative position is that social justice in education is realised through the formation and expansion of all students' real opportunities and freedoms to choose, do and become what they have reason to value. Thus, a just higher education curriculum and pedagogy equips graduates with more capabilities to enhance well-being and agency. The discussion looks at the evidence of 'well-being freedoms' (capabilities), 'well-being achievements' (functionings) in order to examine the extent to which the sociology curriculum and pedagogical practices offered at universities are socially just for all students.

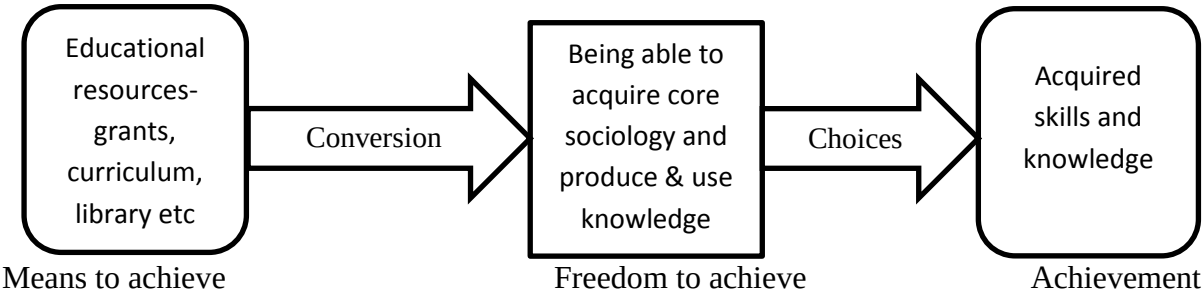
The study adopted four main concepts from capabilities approach: capabilities, functionings, agency, and conversion factors to examine how the curriculum knowledge acquired by undergraduate sociology students' contributes to or impede students' capabilities to live and act in the world. Capabilities draw attention to interpersonal and intrapersonal comparisons of personal biographies and to conversion factors which influence how each student is able to mobilise the resources at their disposal. Conceptually, the distinction between capabilities and functionings requires us to define not only what a student achieves but also the opportunities and freedoms that are available whilst studying. The capabilities approach emphasises agency and choice, but also draws attention to the fact that the capabilities of individuals are constrained or enabled by social arrangements, including education. This means that what an individual can achieve with a given endowment depends on internal and external conditions that determine their capability to transform means into vector functionings (Chiappero-Matinetti and Sabadash 2014: 216).

If we take knowledge as an end of learning, there are a number of factors that affect its attainment. Sociology students have educational input resources that include private resources (family income), curriculum (reading material, content, and syllabus), pedagogy

(teaching approaches) and in-school facilities (library, tutors). The ability to convert these resources into well-being largely depends on conversion factors. To reiterate, there are three types of conversion factors: personal (for example age, sex, talent, and internal abilities), social/external abilities (for example parents' level of education, family income) and environmental factors (for example building infrastructure, climate etc). These factors affect the conversion rate of the means to achieve into effective freedom to achieve. The conversion factors all stress that it is not sufficient to know the resources a person owns or can use in order to be able to assess well-being that he or she has achieved or could achieve; rather, we need to know much more about the person and the circumstances in which he or she is living. Thus, Sen observes that,

> …different people can have quite different opportunities for converting income and other primary goods into characteristics of good living and into the kind of freedom valued in human life. (Sen 1999: 254)

As the student progresses with studies, they must make choices to be and do things that they value. The knowledge a sociology student can achieve, depends on whether the means to achieve is available to transform means to functionings through personal choices. This is illustrated in Figure 9.1. However, this can also be achieved through good teaching (which is crucial but not in the diagram).



Source: Chiappero-Matinetti and Sabadash 2014: 216

Figure 9.1: Education and knowledge as ends

From the empirical data, I extrapolated students' functionings as valued by both the students themselves and the lecturers, and thereafter I regrouped the functionings and extrapolated the underlying common capabilities themes. The common student capabilities domains that I extrapolated are: knowledge and critical thinking, economic opportunity, opportunity to experience/provide good teaching, deliberative dialogues, autonomy and voice, resilience, and recognition, respect, and belonging (Table 9.1). These are presented as they emerged out

of empirical data; this is followed by a synthesis of the main findings and their meaning in relation to existing literature. This is followed by a section that explains the notions of conversion factors and how they relate to the findings, capabilities, functionings, and agency. The last part presents a proposed capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being to provide a curriculum conversation for sociology. But first, I commence by revisiting the concept of educational philosophy in the context of curriculum design and its bearing on achieving capabilities and/ functionings. Importantly, I do not claim to represent the views of all the students and lecturers at EU and IU, but rather to illustrate a method of identifying valued capabilities in sociology.

9.3 Curriculum design, pedagogy and valued capabilities

Reflecting on Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, it is clear that there are functionings that both lecturers and students mentioned because they were achieved (as capabilities) and thus valued, or were valued but not achieved. In earlier chapters I noted that for educational conditions and practices, scholars have proposed capabilities lists that should be expanded in higher education to support human flourishing. Nussbaum (2002: 290) suggests an education that develops each individual's capacity to be fully human; others also suggest lists for capabilities formation in education (see Chapter 3). Sen's approach has little to say on what capabilities ought to be promoted in and through (higher) education, or what achievements matter as much in education as do opportunities (capabilities). As with my work, I followed Sen's encouragement that the identification of functionings and capabilities should be carried out by people involved in the design of the curriculum (although students were not really involved but participated in class) and I did not ask explicitly which functionings (and hence capabilities) were valued. The functionings and capabilities were extrapolated from the qualitative data as Walker (2012), Wilson-Strydom (2011) and Calitz (2016) have done. However, these scholars all took capability theorising into account - not any capabilities are valued but those that support educational well-being. There are some variations and not every capability is valued equally by all lecturers and students. The advantage of the capabilities approach is that it is context sensitive thus participants described capabilities and hence functionings that they valued or they had reason to value.

The identification involved, firstly, functionings valued by EU students and then at IU. Secondly, I combined the two focussing on common functionings (Table 9.1) and did the same for lecturers at EU and IU (Table 9.2). The first column shows the extrapolated capability domains, while the second column shows the functionings that emerged from

empirical data. For both lecturers and students, there are separate columns of valued and achieved capabilities for each group and per university. The tick after each capability indicates whether lecturers or students valued or had reason to value it. The plus or minus symbol (+/-) indicates mixed perspectives and x indicates whether the capability is not valued or achieved by a particular group. The last two columns show how students valued the capabilities in both case studies.

Table 9.1: Capabilities valued by students

Capability themes	Valued Functionings	Achieved by EU students	Achieved: by students at EU	Valued by IU Students	Achieved by students at IU
Knowledge acquisition	To excel academically	✓	*x*	✓	*x*
	To gain knowledge and have a broader knowledge base	✓	✓	✓	✓
	To engage critically with the world	✓	*+/-*	✓	*+/-*
	Multiple perspective	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Decolonised knowledge	✓	*X*	✓	*x*
Economic opportunity	To develop personal and professional skills (Employability)	✓	*+/-*	✓	*+/-*
Good teaching	To develop good teaching skills/ to experience good teaching	✓	*X*	✓	*x*
	Approachable staff	✓	*+/-*	✓	✓
	To be exposed to diversity and learn from others	✓	*X*	✓	*x*
Deliberative dialogue	To participate and deliberate on design of curriculum	✓	*x*	✓	*x*
Agency	Ability to make autonomous decisions	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Ability to participate in various activities	✓	*X*	✓	✓
	To be independent (maturing and looking after oneself)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition and respect	To be treated with human dignity and respect	✓	*X*	✓	✓
	To form good relationships with lecturers & tutors	✓	✓	✓	✓
	To participate in class without being discriminated against	✓	✓	*x*	✓

Table 9.2 Capabilities valued by lecturers

Capability themes	Valued Functionings	Achieved by EU lecturers	Achieved as reported by EU lecturers	Valued by IU lecturers	Achieved as reported by IU 33lecturers
Knowledge acquisition	To excel academically	✓	+/-	✓	✓
	To gain knowledge and have a broader knowledge base	✓	✓	✓	✓
	To engage critically with the world	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
	Multiple perspective	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Decolonised knowledge	✓	*x*	✓	*x*
Economic opportunity	To develop personal and professional skills (Employability)	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
Good teaching	To develop good teaching skills/ to experience good teaching	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
	Approachable staff	✓	+/-	✓	✓
	To be exposed to diversity and learn from others	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
Deliberative dialogue	To participate and deliberate on design of curriculum	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
Agency	Ability to make autonomous decisions	✓	+/-	✓	+/-
	Ability to participate in various activities	✓	*x*	✓	+/-
	To be independent (maturing and looking after oneself)	✓	*x*	✓	✓
Recognition and respect	To be treated with human dignity and respect	✓	✓	✓	✓
	To form good relationships with lecturers & tutors	✓	✓	✓	✓
	To participate in class without being discriminated against	✓	✓	✓	✓

I am now going to consider each capability domain.

9.3.1. Knowledge and critical thinking

Reflecting on the last four chapters, it is clear that the knowledge and critical thinking dimension was valued by lecturers. The capability domain included functionings such as the capability to excel in academic activities, to gain knowledge to improve lives in society, the capability of critical thinking and having multiple perspectives on social reality. The common thread among these is based on understanding knowledge or acquiring skills, which in turn are based on thought, study, and experience. Knowledge exercised through the functioning of critical thinking was the most common functioning and this is not surprising because the discipline of sociology is associated with critical thinking and multiple perspectives (UJ 2014, UKZN 2014). While critical thinking was common, lectures disagreed on the level of achievement of students. Analysis shows a gap between valued and achieved capabilities. Although lecturers in management positions such as Noma (EU) tended to be defensive, other lecturers such as Vaal (IU) were doubtful that the graduates were critical thinkers. The fact that a few lecturers were doubtful about the ability of the students to think critically, analyse and articulate issues they may face during their lives or the fact that they were even hesitant to offer them employment in the Humanities department (EU) is reason enough for us to be concerned. In addition, different views of lecturers and the fact that capabilities such as empathy were not common indicate that some capabilities that are important for well-being were being given less attention.

On the other hand, almost all the students at EU and IU valued the ability to think critically but differed on the level of the achievement. The data illustrates that critical thinking was indeed introduced at undergraduate level and there is evidence that a few students approach situations critically, for example, Judy (EU) critically analysed her uncle's deviant behaviour. Sociological theoretical frameworks are valued as they equip students with a sociological lens and multiple perspectives. Through exposure to sociological frameworks such as functionalism, capitalism and others, students acquired critical thinking and valued knowledge about gender issues, poverty, consumerism and consumption and labour related issues among others. For example, Lisa (EU) became critical and knowledgeable about inequalities in society. She appreciated that sociology frameworks like Marxism helped her understand the poor and how they end up in their circumstances because of oppression. Precious (EU) exhibited knowledge about the gender inequalities that exist in communities. She indicated that because of sociology, she could make informed decisions on equality issues. For example she had decided to pursue further studies by enrolling for an honours

programme rather than being married. The data shows that when students become knowledgeable they are able to critically apply the *what*, *how* and *why* questions and apply sound argument to cases such as the Marikana disaster. However, inconsistencies existed between valued and achieved critical thinking among the students. Memory insisted that some students were uncritical at undergraduate level.

Some of the inconsistencies are as a result of students comparing undergraduate and honours level in terms of how they learned. For example, there is less participation in class and the 'banking system' seems to have derailed the development of critical thinking at undergraduate level. Students at both universities were more confident about achieving critical thinking at honours level than undergraduate level. This is associated with improved student-lecturer engagement and the opportunity to debate and discuss issues in class. Thus, we can argue that their opportunities to participate in discussions and debates are better at honours level as the classes are small. Students are able to raise questions that focus on reasoning perhaps because they had a more solid knowledge base from which to draw in reasoning and debates at honours level than they did in undergraduate studies. Although participation in honours classes was voluntary, it was indirectly forced because every student had to speak in a seminar. At undergraduate level, student participation was voluntary, implying that students had the freedom to participate in activities that they value. However, because of large numbers this was not the case and participation was limited even where it was valued. So, the size of the classes and the requirements to engage in discussion is part of the explanation on why students became critical, but the functioning of gaining sociology knowledge is also important.

In sum, the data shows that critical thinking is valued by both students and teachers. It is also a capability that is essential in both human capabilities and HCT. Although critical thinking cannot be linked to employment, it could be argued that it can help to mould conscious graduates who can contribute to building competent societies.

9.3.2 Economic opportunities

Most lecturers had a human capital perception of a sociology degree. They argued that sociology prepares students for the world of work through imparting skills such as critical, analytical and research skills, which are useful in many jobs. This means that the discipline does not teach a particular skill but provides students with a toolbox to approach various problems. However, there were some lecturers who were also concerned about graduate

employment outcomes. For example, Noma (IU) indicated that some students ended up working as cashiers in supermarkets. If we also consider that most lecturers' think that students are not academically strong, it contradicts the perspective that the students are marketable in the labour market (DoE 2011).

From students' points of view, there is so much anxiety as to whether they will find employment with a sociology major as their qualification. The students' valued being able to get a job after graduation but were concerned that the sociology major was not preparing them for the world of work. It is apparent that students like Emma (EU) and Keith (IU) value the instrumental capability of employment as much as they value other capabilities with intrinsic value. The majority of these students came from poor socio-economic backgrounds and wanted to support their families financially after graduating, thus the instrumental importance of the degree cannot be underestimated. The point remains, however, to subsume HCT in a human development approach. This allows students to gain attributes they need to live and act in the world, and which are important for future careers.

9.3.3 Opportunity to experience/provide good teaching

In both case studies, the lecturers valued *'good'* teaching. In this case *'good'* teaching involves delivery of discipline knowledge to a small group of students, where lecturers engage with students, form good relationships with students, hold debates in class and promote human development and formation of students' capabilities. The aspects of *'good'* teaching identified in this study have been found in previous research (Ashwin et al. 2012, Gibbs 2010, Entwistle 2009)[66]. We can also imagine good teaching as the one proposed by UNDP as a principled framework and pedagogy of human development:

> creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. (UNDP 2001: 9)

Similarly, Walker (2008) conceptualises teaching that is transformative, critical, and attentive both to knowledge and to responsible action in society. With the exception of critical thinking, the *'good'* teaching practised and implemented in both case studies is far from that described above. Although there are efforts to engage in debate, discussions and posing questions to students, the intentional transformational and student agentic notions of development appear limited. Rather, pedagogical practices are more technological than ethical in nature and ethos. At a personal level, teaching methods such as the lecturing and

[66] See Section 2.4.2 for good teaching and learning.

PowerPoint are convenient, economic and cost-effective but make it difficult to meaningfully engage with the large number of students in each class. The lecturers focussed more on delivering content without focussing on the level to which students understood, related to or questioned the content. This significantly undermined the dialogical approach and human side of students and the ethical aspect of teaching. The pedagogical arrangements were convenient for large classes but they promoted 'banking' education. As a result, students over-relied on lecturers for notes and the student-lecturer dependency syndrome was promoted. All this might compromise the development of the autonomy capability.

In assessment and examinations, students are largely expected to memorise and reproduce the lecturers' notes in examinations. This approach to learning did not promote active and argumentative learning. This also did not encourage participation, the cultivation of learning to know[67], learning to be[68] and learning to live together[69] (Delors 1996). At a structural level, pedagogical practices were largely constrained by the multi-tiered lecture rooms that were designed to accommodate large classes. In addition, good teaching was compromised by limited resources in terms of staff and infrastructure such as the sizes of lecture rooms and how they are designed.

Regardless of the challenges that lecturers faced, students valued the opportunity to experience good teaching. Good teaching is both an opportunity and a conversion factor. For lecturers, the capability is to have the opportunity to provide good teaching, while for students it is the opportunity to experience good teaching. Based on students' accounts, it is clear that they valued opportunities for discussion and dialogue, sharing of different ideas and being able to work in smaller groups. They valued the relationship they established with tutors, who were young and closer in age to them. They did not particularly value transmission teaching (through PowerPoint, lectures and Blackboard) though it is one approach to manage large classes at undergraduate level. The students were often bored by these teaching methods, for example; Rejoice (IU) indicated that the lecturers often talked to themselves by talking at the PowerPoint screen, rather than to the students. Unfortunately, what the students valued in terms of teaching was not always available to them.

[67] Learning to know is the understanding and use of knowledge. Related abilities include critical thinking, problem solving and decision-making life skills which are fundamental to informed action (Delors 1996).

[68] 'Learning to be' concerns the concept of agency. Related abilities include life skills for coping, self-awareness, esteem, and confidence, aiming at building an identity, valuing oneself, setting goals, etc (Delors 1996).

[69] Learning to live together implies feeling affiliated to a group, a category, a society and a culture, and understanding and respecting differences (Delors 1996).

In sum, capabilities are multi-dimensional and it is essential for students to acquire knowledge they value, to experience good teaching, to be respected and to deliberate on things that are important to them.

9.3.4 Deliberative dialogues

Whilst evaluation of the quality of programmes is considered an important assessment instrument where students participate in determining programme effectiveness at university departments (Penny 2003, Nasser and Hagtvet 2006, Dorasamy and Balkaran 2013), empirical data indicated inconsistencies, with some lecturers criticising the exercise arguing that students are unqualified to provide a valid evaluation of the quality of modules, a point also raised by Nasser and Hagtvet (2006). However, others valued student input in developing the curriculum. On the other hand, students' valued participating in curriculum design but the student evaluation exercise was all that they got to respond to. Apart from the student evaluation exercise, which students did not take that seriously, there was no other platform for students to participate in the design of curriculum or modules that make up the curriculum. This implies that the feedback compiled by lecturers might have been limited or might not have been a true reflection of what students valued. If we consider this, we can argue that both students and lecturers did not understand the importance of the exercise such that they could give it the attention it deserved. The student voices echo strong sentiments that they did not see themselves being able to bring about change in the curriculum. This suggests lack of curriculum agency and lack of will to challenge the status quo and they often think that it is impossible for them to get and utilise opportunities in future (Sen 1999). But it could also be an informed observation, especially in circumstances where lecturers or institutional arrangements do not value student input. Even though much research continues to be centred on proving that student ratings can be biased, their use is growing with the object of improving the quality of teaching and student learning (Dorasamy and Balkaran 2013).

Although the prescribed core modules for the sociology major were important, students had limited opportunity and freedom to choose modules that matter to them whilst studying. This may have been rather unfair as different students valued different modules, for example, Jack valued 'Human Rights and Security' which was not offered at EU, and Ray valued 'Sociology of Communication' and 'Media Research and Journalism' which was not part of the curriculum at IU. This raises questions on whether it is really feasible to offer all the choices that students' value. However, having freedom of choice and having wide choices is

central: individuals should be free to choose to operationalise capabilities in the forms of valued functionings. As it was, there was no practice of democratic consensus as lecturers decided modules which made up the curriculum. This means that one of the four human development and capabilities approach values, participation, was overlooked by lecturers. Students seemed to be conscious of the significance of this value. The analysis of data shows that in developing curriculum, much need to be done to ensure that the curriculum is operationalised in a way that enhances participation. The participation could be exercised through democratic deliberation as suggested by Sen (2009). Lecturers, students and all relevant stakeholders ought to make their representation on the development of the curriculum. As we move forward, Sociology Departments could provide more curricular space for deliberative conversations between lecturers and students and other relevant stakeholders. Nonetheless, if we look at the students and how they struggled to come up with modules or courses that they valued, one wonders whether they could be able to participate effectively in the design of the curriculum - Sen's notion of public reasoning has been criticised for not giving greater specification on the practicality of carrying out such an exercise and what agency conditions are necessary (Corbridge 2002, Feldman and Gellert 2006).

What further complicated the situation is that the lecturers were hesitant to introduce the debate on whether to review the core of the sociology degree or curriculum to consider employability issues for example. In developed countries, universities tend to be more proactive about current issues. For example, after the 9/11 events in the United States of America, Sociology Departments introduced terrorism courses (AU 2016). Studies in migration have also increased across the Global North because of an increase of refugees in recent years (UNHCR 2015). Moving in that direction, Sociology Departments ought to consider offering disciplinary courses which deal with pressing issues in the South African context. Unemployment, poverty and inequality are the most pressing socio-economic problems in South Africa; and one of the case studies offered a relevant course – 'Poverty and Inequality'. The goal of human development is having freedom to exercise genuine choices and to participate in equal decision-making that effects people's lives. In that respect, deliberative dialogues ought to be introduced at all levels.

9.3.5 Autonomy and voice

Clearly, there was an indication that some students were able to make informed choices and add their voices to things that they valued whilst others showed less evidence for that. If we take for example Judy (EU), she indicated that she was a determined person who knew what she wanted in life; Memory indicated that she wanted to be a social scientist; and Lisa had decided not want to pursue a career in hard sciences. Precious valued gender equity and could make clear gender decisions and voice her concerns in ways of beings. She indicated that she did not want to get married as she wanted to pursue her studies. Knowledge enabled her gender awareness and her autonomy. Here we see the knowledge capability advancing the autonomy capability. In the capabilities approach perspective, capability for voice requires all persons concerned to actively participate in the policy process, a condition for the legitimacy of any individualised social intervention (Bonvin and Farvaque 2005). Bonvin and Farvaque (2005) emphasise that the capability for voice depends on personal characteristics such as discursive competencies or self-confidence, but it more deeply relies on the social and institutional environment and the ability to listen to the concerns voiced by the persons involved. If we consider this, it is clear that the students did not utilise their capability of voice in some instances, or were not enabled to do so. An example is when the students do not raise their voices on issues that they have problems with, for example, suggesting modules that are important to them.

9.3.6 Resilience

Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back after experiencing a shock and the ability to persevere in difficult circumstances. Although it was not mentioned or referred to by many, the few that did mentioned it strongly. Students like Memory argued that their resilience is derived from their childhood experiences. She argued that her rural background enabled her to navigate complex town life after being ignored by her friend who had promised to help her settle. Her rural upbringing equipped her with the resilience capability hence she was able to bounce back quickly. It seemed that Memory was utilising the coping strategies developed in her disadvantaged background and these results support the argument that coping strategies developed in a ‘disadvantaged’ social background could form useful resources for succeeding in higher education (Marshall and Case 2010).

9.3.7 Recognition, respect and belonging

The students valued being recognised and being rewarded when they did well. They underscored the importance of being rewarded with marks and encouraging comments.

Recognition and respect boosted students' morale and ability to approach lecturers who were friendly and approachable. Students at both EU and IU valued healthy and mutually respectful interactions and relationships with lecturers. Overall, IU lecturers were approachable and this had a positive impact on students' confidence. Some students were intimidated by the lecturers, such as Vaal at EU, who they perceived as unfriendly and hence unapproachable. However the paradox is that Vaal was highly rated by other students who felt that they needed to be pushed to work hard. Empathy was indirectly referred to through examples. For example, Ray made reference to how empathetic he had become after taking sociology classes.

What I termed recognition, respect and belonging corresponds to what others term affiliation. Capability research shows that affiliation and belonging are foundational. For, Wolf and De-Shalit affiliation (2007) can be 'fertile'. They coined the notion to distinguish capabilities which enhance other capabilities (fertile), but also added corrosive capabilities, those which are detrimental to other capabilities. Nussbaum (2011) indicates that affiliation plays a distinctive architectonic role, meaning that it organises and pervades other capabilities (Nussbaum 2011: 39). Strydom-Wilson and Walker (2015) also argue that affiliation seems foundational and that it provides an interactional space of curriculum and pedagogical relationships between teachers and students and between student and student. In this space, they argue that new knowledge and identities might be produced through critical engagements. All this shows that it is foundational and hence the need to incorporate it in curriculum and pedagogy.

9.4 Agency

There is little evidence that lecturers paid much attention to agency development. For Sen (1999), agency is intrinsically important for individual freedom and instrumental for collective action and democratic participation. We also know that student agency is 'a key dimension of human well-being' (Walker and Unterhalter 2007: 6), and for students to exercise agency and to live the lives that they value, they ought to have access to conversion factors, for example, a critical, respectful, and inquiring classroom context for the agency to develop (Wood and Deprez 2012). For example, when the lecturers were asked to describe important functionings for sociologists, agency was barely mentioned. To illustrate how to educate for foundational capacity for agency and freedom, I will refer to the work carried out by Wood and Deprez (2012) with their own sociology students. They gave students an assignment to take a leadership role to facilitate a discussion of a reading. The exercise

required students to critically engage, comprehend, and ask questions to promote deeper deliberations, evaluate and form a deep understanding of the reading. In the process students emerged as thinkers, readers and writers and they developed their voices and critical capacities, which are all essential for freedom and agency. It is possible to foster agency through pedagogy, as they show.

Unlike the above well thought exercise, EU and IU departments did not have such exercises. As indicated in Chapters 5 and 7, the learning conditions to nurture agency were limiting. The transmission of content is lecturer centred. This suggests that content was transmitted in an uncritical way, with little engagement for agency development. The content was broad and lacked depth in some courses. The majority of the students from IU and EU struggled to give examples of when they exercised their agency, which is an indication that they find it difficult to imagine or they take limited responsibility to make decisions and pursue or change their lives in terms of the things they regarded as important. The students' collective agency can be exemplified when they make decisions and raise their concerns to the university administration through deliberations or protests on matters concerning them. In South Africa students exercised their agency through activism in the #Fees Must Fall campaign in 2015. It is not clear that such agency is nurtured in sociology classes at EU and IU.

The argument that I advance is that the more of each of these capabilities is developed, the more a student will have agency or the more agency they will have to be the kind of student they want to be. This implies that agency enables them to be the kind of student they want to be as they work towards their own goals. All capabilities intersect and are multidimensional, thus students need all of them to achieve well-being as they reinforce and support each other. Subsequently, agency rests on the platform of these capabilities. If one is taken away, it weakens others as illustrated in Figure 9.2. Thus, equipping graduates with more capabilities, more well-being and more agency means higher education is more just rather than less just or is cognisant of a social justice agenda.

Figure 9.2: Agency and capabilities dimensions

9.5 Towards a capabilities informed approach to teaching and learning sociology

The lecturers from both case studies valued the majority of capabilities which students could develop through the sociology curriculum and teaching practices at both universities. However, these capabilities are partially achieved or not achieved at all by the students and are not always fostered pedagogically. The differences between valued and achieved require us to dig deeper. As such I will use knowledge and critical thinking, employment opportunities and opportunity to experience/provide good teaching to illustrate key issues in capabilities formation. The fact that lecturers listed capabilities that are important for sociologists means that the opportunity freedom to achieve, for example, critical thinking, ought to be available. Critical thinking was not found to be absent in curriculum design but the challenge was found to be stronger with conversion factors, for example, large classes and student under-preparedness. In terms of curriculum, there are things that need to be pedagogically present to achieve critical thinking, for instance the opportunity for debates

and discussions in class. Thus students can hardly achieve critical thinking if the freedom opportunity for debates and discussions is not available. In both case studies, most capabilities are not being achieved, or are patchy.

As shown in Chapters 2 and 3, educational investment constitutes an important part of individual well-being. Education should be rich and thick and have multi-dimensional instrumental and intrinsic value and transformative potential (Sen and Drèze 1995). The traditional purpose of sociology has always been as the science of society, whilst modern sociology has moved to more reflexive attempts to understand how society works. It is an academic discipline introduced in the nineteenth-century and it has never been a career-oriented discipline. If one considers this, one can assume that it is a discipline that is less concerned with education for economic gain. Although sociology is not a career-oriented discipline, we can reasonably argue that its knowledge empowers graduates with critical knowledge, self-reflection and research skills, which should give sociology students a competitive edge in the market. In the world of work, such graduates are able to fit in a diverse number of fields mostly associated with humanities (Smuts 2010); the discipline could prepare students for the world of work. But, as mentioned previously, the development of skills and how they will be used to find employment by different students differs because of conversion factors and agency. It is not only the sociology qualification that can lead one to find a job, but it is more about how the capabilities that one acquires during study and how students act on things that they value. In possession of skills such as critical, analytical and research skills many sociologists have gone on to become leaders of industry in South Africa. But the world of work places more emphasis on skills that contribute to economic development. Thus the labour market responds more favourably to graduates who can help build the economy (Bartik 2009), which justifies some of the anxiety that sociology graduates have.

However, a report on the State of the Humanities in South Africa by ASSAf and the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences report states that humanities graduates took an average of six months to find employment in South Africa. In another study carried out with sociology students at University of Johannesburg, the results show that it was not difficult to find employment with a sociology qualification (Smuts 2010). Although the focus of this study was not on graduate employment rate, a few observations can be made. Firstly, these studies were carried out six years ago and employment rates could have changed. The term

'employed' has always been debated and raises the question of what kind of employment was considered or the definition used. Without delving into the employment debate, we can ask about whether the employment considered is in the field of study of the graduates. A recent study shows that both students and staff in humanities have a poor perception of their employability but some still consider the intrinsic values associated with the qualification (Walker and Fongwa 2017).

The results of a study concerned with the impact of higher education on society, and particularly the education of employable graduates' revealed that employers are not asking for people who engage critically with society (Walker and Fongwa 2017). But employers also need a more expansive understanding of what they seek in graduates beyond field of study and degree grade or quality. The sociology curriculum cannot afford to mould students only with skills that employers want, but as multidimensional human beings (Deprez and Wood 2012). Having said that, I think it is also equally important to investigate the possibility of combining HCT and the capabilities approach in any curriculum and pedagogic endeavour (Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabashdash 2014) to ensure both employment well-being and social and human well-being. For example, Chiappero-Martinetti and Sabashdash argue for the need to estimate and evaluate the gains derived from education by extending the range of economic variables (mostly) taken into consideration, moving towards a broader vision of well-being or considering the non-economistic aspects of education (Ibid 2014: 227). HCT puts attention on the instrumental role of education, whilst the (human) capabilities approach makes it possible to capture other aspects, taking a broader perspective that allows a thorough inquiry into the multi-faceted space of educational outcomes which includes but is not only limited to income and employment. Analysis also shows that income or employment alone does always not reflect satisfaction. The capabilities approach can cast light on important aspects that cannot be sufficiently covered by HCT. For example, students cannot only find satisfaction from employment or income but also from enriching their internal world or leading a socially active life-style.

One way of trying to achieve this would be the consideration of modules that students' value or think would enhance their employability opportunities. For example Memory (EU), suggested 'Human Rights and Security Studies', a module she think gives her a competitive edge in securing employment in government related jobs. Memory can find satisfaction from the income she will earn from the job (capability of being able to work), and the income/wages can also viewed as a means to get a better life (for herself them and their

families)–which forms the core of the life they value (well-being). Through studying sociology and the income, Memory can also develop agency to bring about change in line with what she values or has reason to value. The point I will reiterate is that whilst the capability of employment is important and leads to employment well-being, it should not be allowed to dominate the curriculum, particularly at the cost of determinants that encompass both the direct and indirect values of human capabilities.

Nonetheless, in the absence of good teaching it is difficult for learners to actually convert their 'bundle' of resources into functionings and hence capabilities. Research in human development and capabilities formation suggests that good teaching involves teaching for the individual well-being of each student (Deprez and Wood 2012), education for reasoned values (Sen 2009), education linked to lives people actually live and want to live (Sen 2009: 10), and education as the foundational capacity for agency and freedom (Otto and Zielger 2010: 9). From my findings, I see an attempt to link pedagogy and the lives actually being lived by the students. However, underfunded undergraduate education simply cannot offer pedagogy for human development. Of course, neoliberal forces at play also influence funding and support for humanities, as well as utilitarian notions.

Whilst I acknowledge that lecturers in the humanities face challenges of large classes, with the exception of the tutorial system, there is less evidence to show that lecturers are coming up with ways that assist 'weak' students to navigate the complex university terrain. For example, lecturers in the UK universities, particularly the lower status universities employ biographical methods to ensure that a 'core' of sociology remains intact and sociology knowledge is produced in students (McLean and Abbas 2009). They use students' lives as subject matter to teach the relevance and value of sociology. The results show that biographical methods guide students to understand sociological languages through the lens of their own experiences. The same could be applied in South Africa, after taking contextual conditions into account.

Before discussing how the capabilities approach can inform curriculum and pedagogy, I will firstly unpack the issues of recruitment and 'weak' students and how this is linked to the broader debate on the disregard on the humanities. It is important to note that humanities offers, for black students from poor backgrounds and under-resourced schools, an opportunity to get a degree which might guarantee them a job. If students from these backgrounds are not enrolled in the humanities they would not have been at university

because the majority of them do not have mathematics and science passes for them to access other departments. This means that the participation rates for black students would be lower than it is. Having been offered access, the question is: access to what? This takes us on to examine the curriculum.

The problem of the so called 'weak' students is a complex and multi-layered one which is shaped by issues such as the lack of preparedness of students and staff; pedagogy; the conceptualisation of the educational process, particularly in terms of the appropriateness of content and assessment methods and its relationship with different institutional cultures among other issue (CHE 2011). If we examine the CHE (2013) proposal which suggested that the undergraduate degree time be extended by one year to cater for student under-preparedness, weaknesses can be identified. While this intervention seems just, I argue that extending the duration of degree programmes is inadequate as it seems to address graduate under-preparedness and provides students with few employability skills through opportunities for practical or work integrated learning. The CHE report does talk about the need for curriculum reform and for some case study disciplines - it dwells on subject content and how it is delivered. Focussing on the subject matter seems to have been the next step. Advancing the argument differently, Rogan and Reynolds (2015) argue that schooling quality and low socio-economic status does not only have the expected impacts on access to higher education or performance at university, but they are also clearly linked with study choices and career development.

Broadly, the 'weak' students' debate is also linked to the decline of the humanities debate which has been documented by several authors nationally and internationally (ASSAf 2011, Nussbaum 2011). Although the decline has been largely covered, none of these reports focusses on the recruitment of under-prepared students in the Humanities in South Africa. Following in that vein, I want to raise an issue that the majority of students who are recruited in the humanities might have less knowledge about the humanities or even value them. Producing graduates with good graduate attributes depends on whether the humanities are attracting students who value the humanities in the first place. The majority of students (for example, EU's Precious and Memory) ended up doing sociology by accident as they could not be accepted in other preferred degree programmes. Although they both valued the discipline as they progressed, they started the programme on a negative note with less motivation and drive to succeed. In this vein, humanities offers access for individuals who

otherwise would not be able to go to university but needs to be better encouraged through university-school contacts.

From a capabilities approach perspective, the educational goal should be to provide the curriculum conditions as a conversion factor for sociology students' capabilities to be developed, even though how these are exercised would then depend on individuals' choices. In this regard, sociology conversion factors must be examined as they can act as an enabler or constraint on students' functionings, capabilities, choices, agency, aspirations and identity. We know that sociology students are diverse hence have different needs but in the case studies lecturers tend to treat the students as homogeneous. When designing the curriculum and pedagogy, the lecturers pay limited attention to students' personal characteristics. These conversion factors influence how each sociology student is able to mobilise the bundle of resources at his or her disposal and they draw our attention to interpersonal comparisons which enables us to identify the underlying conversion factors available or not to these students. For example, Memory is black, comes from a poor socio-economic background (parents unemployed–low socio-economic class) and attended township schools, whilst Lisa is Indian, her father is an engineer (presumably middle class), and she attended a better school. These two have different external circumstances in terms of race, socio-economic background and the high schools they attended. Thus their personal beings differ and this might mean that their ability to convert available resources into valuable opportunities might also differ. Their personal characteristics are different, for example, Lisa's home language is English whilst Memory's home language is Sesotho. Sociology is taught in English which suggests that Lisa might have a high language conversion factor enabling her to understand sociology whereas Memory, whose first language is Sesotho might have a low conversion factor. This means that the degree to which Memory and Lisa can transform a resource into a functioning differs.

At the centre of capabilities approach is the notion of well-being and justice. Sen argues that in seeking well-being and justice, what we should equalise is not resources or some form of input but rather human capabilities, that is, what people are able to be and to do. Sen's (1980) question, "equality of what", raises questions about social justice and equality in higher education in terms of access, inputs treatment and so forth. Equality does not necessarily mean equal participation in higher education but it requires us to examine different needs of different individuals and groups. Thus capabilities approach also enables us to put a focus on

equality in the capability to convert resources into functionings. Crucial to this is the process for people to come to decisions about what they have reason to value in and from education, or any other aspect of social action. Thus, the expansion of human capability involves "the freedoms (people) actually enjoy in choosing the lives that they have reason to value" (Sen 1992: 81). People should be able to make choices that matter to them for a valuable life. If we apply this to recruitment of students, we will be able to examine opportunities and choices and values that can convert freedoms to actual achievement and realised agency.

On being recruited, students are expected to make choices about degrees they value. Students should be able to choose the degrees that they value and they must be free to do just that. This means addressing pre-university conditions that shape academic achievement as well. By so doing, we are not only concerned with what a person will end up doing but what one is able to do, whether or not she chooses to make use of the opportunity. There is a difference between choosing a degree and being free to study for the degree. At both IU and EU, the majority of the students do not choose the degrees or majors they want; rather they end up in sociology by accident. Although students like Memory end up liking the discipline, the choice of subject is rather uninformed. As previously stated a multi-dimensional capabilities approach, considers what students value being and doing, and argues for the expansion of their capabilities to become and do. The most important thing about this is for students to come to decisions about what they have reason to value in a degree. This means that students should be allowed to choose degree programmes that they value and they should make choices that matter to them. If we are to produce graduates with desired attributes, the first point of call for the recruiters should be marketing the humanities and social science majors on offer, and the public value of the humanities and social sciences. This means that a person who enrols for sociology major should, in the first place, understand the discipline, its value and social ambition (critical thinking, multiple perspectives etc) and make an independent decision to enrol. However, quality teaching is also essential to achieve all this. On the other hand, I also suggest that students might have reason to value higher education more than a specific degree. In other words, it is more about getting any degree. If they can choose beyond that, that would however expand their capabilities and agency. In addition, the decline of the humanities in South Africa and elsewhere has something to do with how employers are responding to the graduates being produced. Whilst sociology has to maintain its distinctive characteristics, there is a need to engage employers for curriculum insights.

When enrolled, lecturers regard students as ‘weak’ students’ based on their Matric grades and academic performance. It is rather unfair to judge students’ academic performance by examining their matriculation grades only without focussing on the individual student experiences that could have impacted on their grades. The ‘weak’ grades might be a reflection of broader issues in the secondary schooling system, family, and individual traits. The majority of the students come from township schools that are under-resourced and are facing challenges that include poor teacher training; unskilled teachers; lack of commitment to teach by teachers; poor support for learners at home; and a shortage of resources in education.

The capabilities approach does not specify who decides what sociology students have to value; it creates space to deliberate and debate on issues. Although sociology is a discipline with core knowledge, the room to deliberate on capabilities to be included in the curriculum still stands. In the case studies, the spaces for dialogue are limited yet the capabilities approach offers valued insights on how students could be involved in the design of curricula. Sen’s notion of public deliberation is vital in advancing democratic processes in formulating university policy. He argues that advancement of justice depends on inclusive democracy that allows public reasoning and discussion that injects different perspectives, plural voices on educational matters (Sen 2009). Walker (2012) also pursues the same argument noting that public deliberation provides space for continued scrutiny about how university and relevant stakeholders could decide values in the curriculum. As such, students could contribute to the design of curriculum through public deliberation. This involves an equitable and secure distribution of both power and opportunities among all relevant stakeholders including students and employers, rather than limiting it to lecturers only. It is important for lecturers to listen to students’ input and consider their expectations and aspirations and what they value in the curriculum and pedagogy. Knowing students’ expectations enables lecturers to select sociology content that is aligned to students’ expectations. This ensures that students can acquire the disciplinary knowledge important for sociologists, whilst meeting students’ expectations.

These issues have implications for government policy which should aim to address the design of sociology curriculum in universities. As highlighted in Chapter 1, the absence of a policy framework at university level and educational philosophy at departmental level has resulted in universities and Faculties and hence departments designing curriculum without a reference point. University policy should create an equal learning environment; prioritise addressing

conversion factors such as students' finances and capabilities such as equal recognition so as to prevent the threatening of other capabilities such as not having emotional stability, active participation in university activities, and being confident. This is achieved through creating environments with fair opportunities, removing obstacles constraining individuals from converting capabilities into functionings, and reducing or eradicating risks threatening peoples achieved functionings.

9.6 A capabilities-inspired curriculum model

As indicated in Chapters 1 and 2, literature that illustrates the contribution of the capabilities approach in provoking critical reflection on conceptions of curriculum development is growing. The potential links between the various dimensions are suggested by the arrows drawn between and across the three columns (Figure 9.3). Based on these links, it can be seen that one goal of a sociology curriculum is to produce graduates who value their achievements (that is enhancing a sense of determination to pursue valued functionings and determine their roles in society).

Empirical data has shown that curriculum knowledge is not the starting point for curriculum planning and construction but the vehicle through which capabilities can be developed. From this perspective, the first stage for curriculum planning is identifying the capabilities needed to live and act in the world and from there the sociology knowledge that would foster capabilities. The capabilities should enable sociology graduates to live enriched lives and to participate actively in democratic life. Selecting capabilities in education means looking at what beings and doings are crucial to individual students, collectively and at societal level, thus providing a foundation to enhance other beings and doings that can contribute to a more just society. Sen (2009) suggests that people could hold democratic deliberation in meetings where information, knowledge and diverse perspectives could be debated. The process could involve students, lecturers (for professional input) and all other relevant stakeholders to capture important capabilities that can be included in the sociology curriculum. Once the valued capabilities are captured as a working guide, the second step will focus on knowledge organisation to achieve capabilities. Whilst lecturers bring in the technical expertise (maintaining core sociology), the knowledge selection must be aligned with the (indicative) capabilities that the students have reason to value in order to achieve valued functionings. This makes the organisation of curriculum knowledge a pedagogical challenge, where the sociology curriculum developers select knowledge with reference to its role in developing capabilities. The third step will determine how knowledge is transmitted to students to

achieve learning experiences with reference to their capabilities. According to Ryan (1999: 84), education can be identified as a liberal project if aimed at preparing autonomous, augmentative and tough-minded individuals who eventually become good liberal citizens. Walker (2004) and Nussbaum (2005) confirm that the pedagogical implications of fostering capabilities are of ethical concern based on human flourishing of every student. Learning from the deliberations, pedagogy for capabilities may include: participatory methods, reflexive actions and cultural awareness. The fifth step is the evaluation of achieved functionings, thus the outcome of the curriculum. Finally, the task is to ascertain what student functionings have been developed because of the sociology curriculum and pedagogy.

Borrowing from Walker (2007, 2009, 2012) and Reid (2005), I conclude this chapter by proposing a capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being. The model suggests grounds for (re)thinking policy orientations to sociology curriculum developers, particularly on how the capabilities approach and the more limited HCT can complement each other in higher education and curriculum development (Figure 9.3). The framework provides a focus for a curriculum conversation in sociology. The general logic behind this view is that, a well-defined sociology curriculum and pedagogical implementation ought to enhance sociology graduates' capabilities. In that context, sociology curriculum development ought to implement a bottom-up approach (through involvement of students and professional organisations) through identifying indicative capabilities that will determine the knowledge type to be included in the curriculum. In so doing, experts (including subject matter experts, students, educational consultants, instructional/technology designers) can contribute to the development of the curriculum. The capabilities and the functionings should influence how the knowledge will be transmitted pedagogically. This process necessitates that all relevant stakeholders contribute to curriculum development that will enable the students to live and act in the world. With regards to agency, the more capabilities are developed, the more a student will have agency or the more agency they will have to be the kind of student they want to be (as previously stated in Section 9.4). This implies that agency enables them to be the kind of student they want to be as they work towards their own goals.

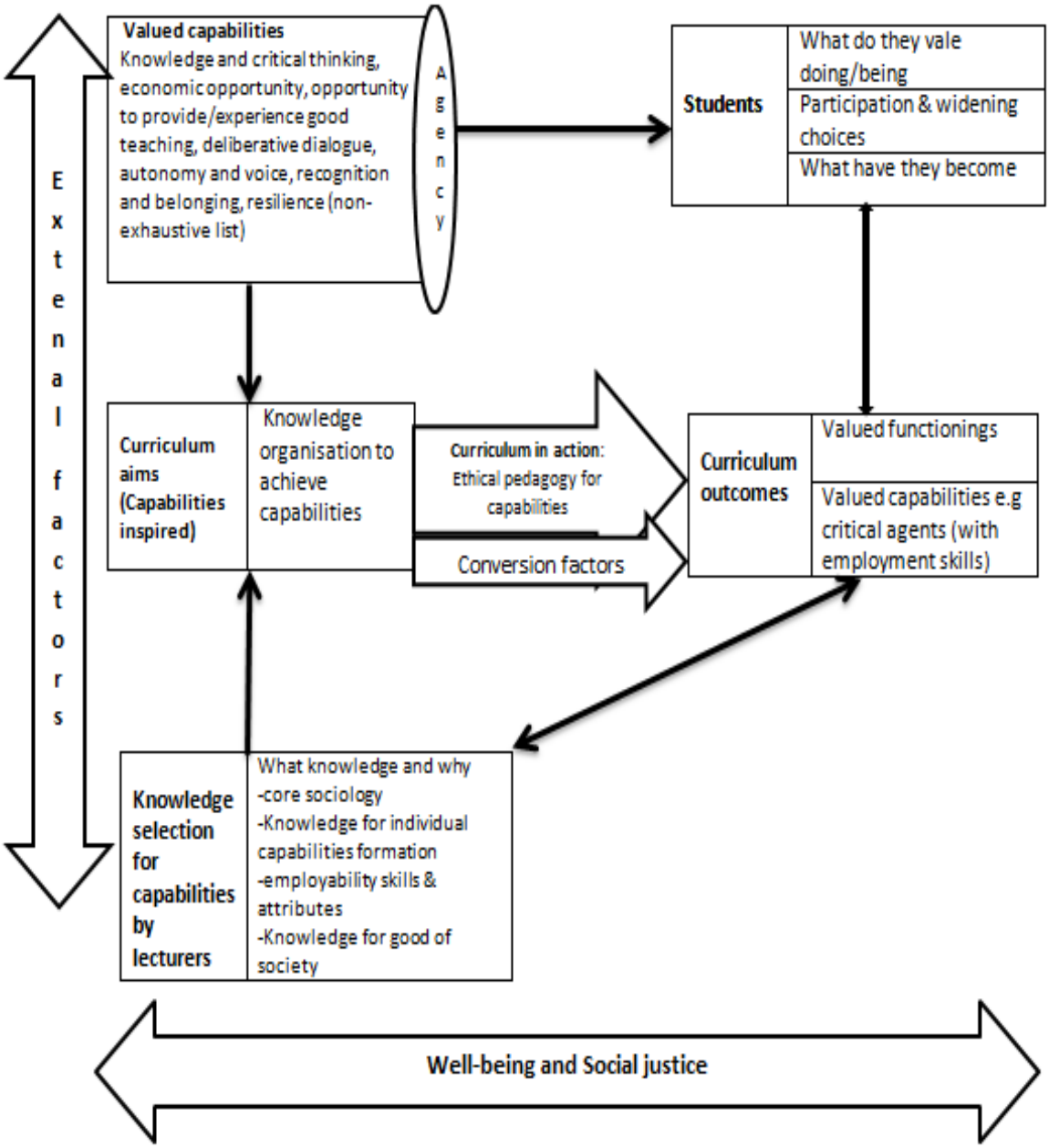


Figure 9.3: A capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being

This model complements Walker's (2006, 2012) frameworks for curriculum and capabilities, Nussbaum's (2010) list of capabilities and, others who have advanced higher education related to capabilities development by emphasising that higher education ought to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and competences individuals need in their working lives. The model suggests a way to start a dialogue about skills for employment in sociology curriculum. It is evident throughout the research that the students valued education for intrinsic and instrumental reasons. For example, in valuing the intrinsic purposes of learning sociology the students indicated that they 'became critical agents' and could examine a situation from different angles thus 'having multiple perspectives'. Students, most of whom

come from poor families, valued the instrumental value of higher education, for example, qualification attainment to help them secure jobs to earn enough money to look after themselves and their families. Securing jobs requires that work related training, work placements or on-the-job training is embedded in the curriculum thus improving employability of sociology graduates. The proposed model suggests a way of a conceptualising curriculum model that is relevant and aligned with the world of work and one that advances their professional knowledge, skills and understanding and, ultimately, improves their chances of employment. In the end, it is the students who will benefit from education which has genuine intrinsic and extrinsic value. It seems that the pursuit life of the mind is only for the well-off. However, the development of professional skills and the chances of employment will depend on the development of capabilities and how individuals exercise their agency to pursue the life they value.

9.7 Conclusion

An empirically generated list of seven capabilities has been presented in this chapter. The capabilities are non-exhaustive and not prescriptive but they are a place to enable us to begin a dialogue for a sociology curriculum. The assumption is that if we lay these over curriculum and pedagogy and Sociology Departments, we can begin to see how well lecturers are doing in forming the capabilities. The better they do it the more capabilities we can make assumptions about social justice.

The chapter also reveals that students valued discussions, debates, recognition and respect, opportunity to experience/provide good teaching, employment (being trained as professionals) which they do not always get; students' freedoms to achieve what they have reason to value or to be in other spheres is being constrained. If real opportunities are not made available, for instance to develop an employment capability, there is less chance to achieve employment well-being at the end. The analysis illustrated that sociology is a discipline that is concerned with social ambition, but I propose that it is time we revisit the curriculum to consider also how to address the capability of employment, which is a recurring point throughout. This does not take away the fact that sociology empowers students with skills such as critical thinking which are important for employment. I advance the notion that HCT and capabilities approach complement each other in education and it is worth attempting to use the two frameworks to inform the design of sociology curriculum.

It is clear that lecturers value knowledge acquisition, deliberative dialogue and good teaching. At IU, recognition and respect, agency, and employment capability themes are implemented somewhat better. However, there is a gap between valued capabilities and achieved capabilities. In both case studies, it is not clear how some of the capabilities are developed. In the context of higher education expansion, the chapter offers ways to move the delivery of knowledge from being a technical project to an ethical one.

More importantly, lectures in both case studies are not considering conversion factors and the need for developing agency. This makes it difficult for students to achieve what they value. It is also clear that even if the means to achieve (curriculum initiatives) are made available to all, there are conversion factors that need to be considered as they can affect the way one converts means to achieve. The considerations of these are limited.

Overall, the chapter has shown how capabilities approach and human development concepts can be used to interrogate and inform curriculum and pedagogy. But if education is about developing individual well-being and freedom as well as social development, we will not achieve it if we do not consider what students value. As it stands, the formation and expansion of all students'real opportunities and freedoms to choose, do and become what they have reason to value is constrained. Thus, graduates are not being equipped with more capabilities, more well-being and more agency freedom. This means that higher education is less just rather than more just. The final chapter will present what can be done to both theorise and promote just and equitable higher education through curriculum, contributions of the study and, the study's limitations.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and priorities for a capability-inspired sociology curriculum beyond 2017

"We cannot become what we need to be, by remaining what we are". (De Pree 1987)

10.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study. It commences by reflecting on the aim of the study and research questions, and highlights key findings. Based on the findings, the chapter then makes recommendations for educational policies and practices aimed at rethinking sociology curricula from a capabilities approach perspective. Furthermore, the chapter explains the contribution of this study to existing scholarship and its significance in this regard. It concludes by outlining important areas which fell beyond the scope of this study for further research.

10.2 Revisiting the research aim and questions

When conceptualising this study, my concern was with whether sociology students valued what they were learning and what they would become as a result of studying sociology as a major. This concern came about as a result of higher education policy that has left the curriculum more or less untouched (Lange 2015). Issues concerning high attrition rates, low throughput rates, poor graduate outcomes and disregard of the humanities by employers and society have been raised in the South African context and beyond. However, less attention has been given to unpacking these challenges and the factors responsible. In the context of higher education expansion, most (not all) curricula and pedagogies appear to be technical projects aimed at responding to market demands at the expense of an expansive human development ethos, which contributes to both economic advancement and human development. Although research informing curriculum review in social sciences and particularly sociology has been conducted, there has been less of a focus on an expansive curriculum as a project concerned with democratic issues of justice, capabilities formation and well-being. Arguably, less emphasis has also been given to curriculum content, which is based on the graduate outcomes and capabilities formation. If we consider the field of sociology we realise that it is fluid and covers a broad range of topics. It is not career oriented and advances the social ambition of the social sciences, hence being used as a case study.

At the heart of the study were beings and doings that students valued or had reason to value. In other words, I sought to find out if the students were learning what they had expected to learn. On the other hand, the study sought to understand why lecturers were implementing the

curriculum they were teaching. My normative position is that social justice is realised through the formation and expansion of all students'real opportunities and freedoms to choose, do and become what they have reason to value. Thus, equipping graduates with more capabilities, more well-being and more agency means higher education is not only more just but is also responsive to the real life challenges of graduate employability and social relevance.

In the subsequent section I provide summaries on the key findings for each question.

Research question number 1: *What understandings of sociology as an academic discipline inform the development of curriculum and its operationalisation in the teaching of sociology at undergraduate level in the case study university departments? What student functionings are valued by sociology lecturers in constructing a curriculum?*

This was one of the most important research questions of the study and it was addressed in Chapters 5, 7 and 9. It sought to examine what informed the undergraduate curriculum, with a focus on what functionings were considered important by the lecturers. With regards to curriculum-in-action (Pedagogy), I teased out how lecturers sought to promote capabilities (opportunities) and functionings (achievements) through teaching. Through the analysis I illustrated that there was agreement among lecturers at both universities on the lack of a unifying framework to justify and give direction to what the curriculum is striving to achieve. By and large, lecturers concurred that functionings that are important for sociologists include critical thinking, having multiple perspectives, imaginative thinking, and ability to analyse and conduct research. With the exception of critical thinking, having multiple perspectives and imaginative thinking, which were developed through sociological theories, there was less evidence to show that knowledge was intentionally selected to develop graduate functionings. The lecturers did not agree on the level of intent to develop and achieve functionings, hence capabilities. This, I argue, points to a gap between intention to achieve and achieved outcome. In terms of curriculum there are things that need to be present to achieve critical thinking, for example, the opportunity for class debates and discussions. Such opportunities were not always available and were compromised by the size of the bigger classes. The development of critical thinking skills was significantly undermined as the freedom opportunity for debates and discussions was not always available. The absence of achieved functioning(s) may indicate an absence of valued capabilities at the conceptualisation of the curriculum. Thus, observed functionings can be regarded as proxies for assessing whether or not the underlying capabilities have been formed and are being sustained. In both case studies, most capabilities were patchy. Besides large classes, other factors that contributed to

this included but were not limited to the quality of students they recruited (largely from poor secondary backgrounds), hence poor student motivation, as well as long curricula that did not always provide space for debates and discussions at the end of the year or in between.

Research question number 2: *To what extent are curriculum intentions aligned with pedagogical approaches*?

The second research question was addressed in Chapters 5, 7 and 9. The results indicated that knowledge was transmitted in various ways but that the main method at both departments was the lecture. The lectures seemed to transmit knowledge from lecturers to students, with less interaction for knowledge co-production. The teaching was largely less interactive and concerns about 'spoon-feeding' and 'banking' were raised by lecturers at both departments. In addition, students were treated as a homogeneous group despite the diversity not only in cultures but more so in academic aptitudes and dispositions. This fails to optimise the different resources that students come to the university with as well as the different conversion factors they possess. For example, issues of secondary schooling quality and low socio-economic status affect students' learning experiences. These factors not only have the expected impacts on access to higher education or performance at university, but they are also clearly linked with study choices and career development (Rogan and Reynolds 2015). The fact that lecturers expressed concern about the ways in which they delivered their courses meant that there was a problem.

To address these concerns, sociology knowledge ought to be transmitted to students to achieve learning experiences with reference to capabilities formation. Once the knowledge has been identified for capabilities formation, the next step is to deliver the knowledge. This has pedagogical implication in that the fostering of capabilities becomes an ethical concern based on the human flourishing of every student (Walker 2007). This renders the organisation of curriculum knowledge a pedagogical challenge, where sociology curriculum developers select knowledge with reference to its role in developing capabilities. However, this is the ideal whereas the reality on the ground might not be so conducive. We know that in their teaching, academics face larger classes, of a largely under-prepared student cohort, and many experience institutional pressure to achieve and maintain high pass rates. While this is the reality, our challenge, as development practitioners, is to look at ways to reduce injustices in teaching and learning. In his idea of comparative justice, Sen (2009) encourages us to make choices to improve human lives and reduce injustice. In this case, we can think of ways to

help under-prepared students, for example through offering more frequent tutorials in smaller groups. The starting point is what ought to be (valued) in terms of people's lives, what is required to achieve that, and whose responsibility it will be. These questions require public deliberations with all relevant stakeholders with an emphasis on the use of democratic mechanisms, and a commitment to the search for impartial judgement. People could also consider what others are doing. Put in curriculum design terms, this implies deliberations to consider what students want to be or want to do as a result of studying sociology as a starting point. Above all, this requires good teaching or the opportunity to experience good teaching. Systematically, universities would need to be better funded than is currently the case.

Research question number 3: *In what ways does curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contribute or prohibit the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world? What functionings (and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree?*

The third research question was addressed in Chapters 6, 8 and 9. As highlighted in the literature review, a study was needed with a focus on how curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology students contributed to enhancing or prohibiting their capabilities to live and act in the world. Certain common themes can be drawn from the two departments. Firstly, the extent to which the curriculum, pedagogical arrangement and learning experiences expanded students' well-being and their agency varied in both departments. However, some capabilities were also developed. As with lecturers, students valued knowledge and critical thinking, as well as being able to understand and act on things deemed important to them under difficult circumstances. Besides these pedagogical constraints, students clearly valued what they learned and the knowledge they acquired during the lectures. They illustrated the way in which their sociology curriculum enabled them to think about things in different ways. For example, the students clearly valued the ability to critically engage with contemporary social issues and debates.

Treating students as a homogeneous group, the curriculum and pedagogy failed to appreciate the differences in students' learning abilities. However, the capabilities approach pays more attention to issues of human diversity and acknowledges that people are different due to conversion factors. At both EU and IU, the curricula, teaching and learning failed to adequately consider conversion factors at three different levels: personal, family, and

institutional. However, conversion factors can act as an enabler or constraint on students' capabilities, functionings, choices and agency.

At EU the results demonstrated that some of the students were not confident about whether their undergraduate peers had acquired some of the mentioned functionings and capabilities, for example, becoming critical beings. This in a way signalled that the expansions of real freedoms enabling undergraduates to live and act were compromised. While students valued debates, discussions, and participation in class they did not always get the opportunity to engage in these. Other than the student evaluation exercise, students had no other means to contribute to curriculum design. There was evidence of valuing 'well-being freedoms' (which are capabilities), 'well-being achievements' (which are functionings) and 'agency freedoms' and 'achievements'. However, the fact that the students did not have the freedom, for example, to hold frequent debates and discussions in class means that capabilities formation was constrained. The other issue that the students felt strongly about was the lack of opportunities to develop practical skills to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market. With this, I argue that, to only a lesser extent, did the curriculum and pedagogy practices at EU and IU expanded the opportunities and choices of sociology graduates to become and do what they valued or had reason to value.

Research question number 4: *What can a capability approach lens contribute to the theoretical and practical development of the sociology curriculum for undergraduates?*

This question was addressed across Chapters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 1 outlined the South African higher education context and reflected on curriculum policy areas and gaps. The overarching point to be taken from this is that educational policies in South Africa have been developed under the banner of transformation. Walker (2015) argues that transformation arguments do not reveal much about students' genuine educational choices, aspiration and agency. She asserts that the transformation discourse also does not unpack what students say about unsatisfactory curricula. Chapter 3 provided insights on what the capabilities approach offers to higher education and curricula. It uses evidence from the higher education literature to advance arguments for the capabilities approach as a framework aimed at asking what people are able to do and to be in shaping their lives. Chapter 3 also considered the theoretical underpinnings of the capabilities approach and how a capability-inspired sociology curriculum could look. Sample frameworks which show how educational objectives, indicative capabilities, pedagogies and functionings could look, based on human

development values, were provided. The results chapters (that is Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) discussed the evidence of the curriculum being implemented at two departments, whilst illuminating gaps. Chapter 9 presented the theorisation and drew everything together in terms of how a capabilities-inspired sociology curriculum could be developed. Overall, the chapters revealed that there are gaps in curriculum design and pedagogical approaches within universities and departments. These gaps need to be interrogated to understand what knowledge lecturers consider and why, why students learn what they learn, and why some students are doing well whilst others are struggling. National, university and departmental policies could learn from the results and adjust accordingly.

10.3 Original contribution and significance

In addition to the provision of directions for future research, my study has made three major contributions to the literature on undergraduate sociology, pedagogy and capabilities formation, since the combined research in these three areas is relatively new and the related literature is limited to the Global South.

Firstly, the research contributes to broader debates on the purposes and practices of teaching and learning in higher education, and also adds to under-researched pedagogical research, and to conversations in undergraduate sociology curriculum design.

Secondly, using the capability approach as both a normative lens for theorising, and as a site for analysing qualitative data, the value of the data is enriched because it provides valuable conceptual grounds for critically assessing and problematising what is going on in undergraduate sociology education in South Africa. It suggests a different way of thinking and conceptualising curricula from the perspective of well-being, agency and human development. The capabilities approach casts light on how university curricula and indeed education might be transformed. The study builds on and contributes to higher education curriculum and pedagogy studies as well as the field of university education which advances notions of a just education system and the creation of a better world. The study may potentially influence policy regarding social sciences curriculum development in South African universities.

Finally, I interrogated and extrapolated student functionings that are valued by sociology lecturers in constructing a curriculum and what functionings (and hence capabilities) students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree. In the process I was able

to identify important capabilities for sociologists that are valued by lecturers. This was important as it tells us what graduate attributes a graduate ought to possess. In the same process, I identified functionings and hence capabilities that students value and aspire to achieve. From these results, I generated a capabilities-inspired curriculum model for human well-being (Figure 9.3). The model can be used as a normative framework to guide curriculum conversations and design in undergraduate sociology. The aim of the model is to provide a framework that can stimulate debate and discussions on how to design undergraduate sociology curricula. The outstanding feature of the model is that it places emphasis on combining the HCT and capabilities approach, particularly to achieve and enhance economic opportunities for sociology graduates. In the end, it is the students who will benefit from studying a curriculum that is relevant and aligned to capabilities formation with an emphasis on the real world of work.

The research is significant in that it generated a list of functionings that could be considered in the design of undergraduate sociology curricula. It refreshes and stimulates debates about what ought to be and how we can achieve desired curriculum learning outcomes. The study explored and we learned new things about what both lecturers and their students value about curriculum design.

10.4 Recommendations for policy and practice

I argue that there is a clear intention to develop capabilities that are important for sociologists among academics. However, these are not adequately developed. There are a number of initiatives that can help address some of the challenges that both lecturers and students are facing in undergraduate sociology. In view of the findings presented, there a number of issues that need to be addressed both policy wise and through practical training. These include:

i) (Re)think policy orientations to sociology curriculum design, particularly about how the capabilities approach and the HCT can complement each other in higher education and curriculum design.

ii) Define theoretical underpinnings (for capabilities formation) at faculty and departmental level that will give direction to the basic goals of the education provided. Accordingly, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment should be aligned.

iii) Pay particular attention to the staff: student ratios required to support the kinds of teaching and learning that are required to achieve the agreed basic goals of the Bachelor of

Social Science degree / Bachelor of Arts degree; minimally expand tutorials with smaller numbers.

iv) Decolonise the curriculum to provide desired transforming knowledge to engage with African contemporary challenges.

v) Initiate a public forum, with an emphasis on the use of democratic mechanisms to the design of undergraduate sociology curricula. All relevant stakeholders including students, lecturers and employers must be encouraged to participate.

vi) Initiate work placement and on-the-job learning, which could be embedded in the curriculum thus improving the employability of sociology graduates.

vii) Initiate support interventions for 'weak' learners or students struggling to cope without lowering the standards of their freedoms to learn, for example, through increasing the number of tutorials. In the same vein, consider a retraining/mentoring programme for lecturers to provide quality teaching and hold faculty and departmental refresher courses on how to conform and implement SAQA level descriptors.

10.5 Avenues for future research and conclusion

Undertaking this research study has been an invaluable learning experience. I have gained an understanding of the nature of research and of the cyclical, sometimes messy nature of the research process. I have learned, for example, that things do not fit neatly into categories and that research can be frustrating and sometimes tedious, yet at other times immensely rewarding and even exhilarating. This research study has also provided some key ideas which have helped me examine my own professional values, and have offered guidelines for possible changes to my own future practice**.** As I conclude this thesis, I provide four areas for future research which were identified as important but could not be addressed in the scope of this investigation. These have been formulated on the basis of the present study's findings and they can assist in designing undergraduate sociology curricula:

i) Determine how university sociology is constructed, understood and explained by leading South African academics in sociology. Leading sociologists can be interviewed to discuss curriculum development and the way in which sociology has evolved as a discipline in South Africa.

ii) Conduct a follow-up study to ascertain the employment rate of sociology graduates in South Africa. The study will focus on the type of work they do and the skills they acquired as a result of studying towards a sociology programme. This would provide empirical data

that can be used to inform us about how well the curriculum is equipping students with capabilities to live and act in the world.

iii) Conduct a study amongst employers to find out what they look for in sociology graduates. This would provide us with information about the functionings and capabilities that employers value as well as about what they think about the current crop of graduates in this regard.

iv) Conduct further pedagogical research that responds to the challenges that accompany higher education expansion and that also considers diverse student learning needs.

It is my hope that the study will influence curriculum policy of undergraduate degrees and the employment outcomes of sociology graduates in South Africa. The expressed desire is that ultimately we should strive to provide education which is fulfilling and enriching to individuals, as a contribution to building a more just society.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Student interview schedule

Research question: In what ways does the curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate students contribute to the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world? What functionings (and hence capabilities) do students have reason to value as a result of studying for a sociology degree?

Demographics

- Race
- Gender
- Type of school attended: former model C/ township/rural/private
- Parent/guardian occupation: Father/ Mother/ Other e.g. grandmother
- Are you the first in your family to go University? Who else has gone to university and what did they study?
- When did your complete your bachelor's degree?
- How many years did it take you to complete the bachelor's degree?

Why did you decide to come to university and why did you choose to major in sociology? What did you expect or hope for? Why did you enrol at this university?

What have you become as a result of studying sociology? What are the most important things that you value in your life? Did sociology meet your expectations about and for the important things that you value?

What kinds of things were you taught about in your degree? What did you like most about the curriculum and why? What did you like least and why? Did you have freedom to choose modules that were important to you? What were these modules? Why were they important to you?

One of the things that students can acquire from studying sociology are being able to act independently and being able to make their own choices. Do you think studying sociology cultivated this in you? How was this developed? Can you give an example when you acted independently and you were able to make own choices as result of studying sociology?

Did studying sociology make you see society differently/critical of society/ critical of knowledge. How have you experienced this?

What kinds of teaching approaches did you like most? Why? Please give an example/s of a lecture or tutorial in which you really liked the teaching approach. How do the different teaching methods help you realise your own valued life goals? Were there teaching methods which you really did not like? Why was this? Please describe an example.

At the end of each modules student complete course evaluation forms, how seriously do you take this exercise? Are there any other ways that students give feedback to lecturers on curriculum and teaching methods?

Who is/has been your best lecturer and why? Who is/has been your worst lecturer and why?

What advice would you offer to students who are planning to enrol for this degree in future?
Is there anything about sociology curriculum that we have not covered that you would like to discuss?

Appendix 2: Student information sheet

Student information sheet: Sociology, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Capabilities Formation. A case study in one South African University.

My name is Bothwell Manyonga (student number 2013167636). I am a Ph.D. student at the Centre for Research in Higher Education and Development (CRHED) at the University of the Free State. I am researching a project entitled *'Sociology, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Capabilities Formation. A case study in one South African University'.*

Study aim: My study examines how curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate student contributes to the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world. The research comprises three phases: (i) Policy analysis phase, (ii) Sociology curriculum and pedagogy analysis phase, and (iii) a Micro-level analysis phase, at the level of one university Sociology Department. In the first phase, analysis of policy documents and secondary data on Higher Education (HE) and sociology will be undertaken at national and university level. In the second phase, a small number of leading South African sociology academics will be interviewed to discuss the ways in which they view the construction of sociology curriculum and pedagogy in South Africa. In the third phase, sociology lecturers and students will be interviewed to capture their perspectives on curriculum development of sociology, its pedagogical delivery and the student learning outcomes.

Ethics: The University of the Free State Research Ethics Council and the University X (university under study) Research Ethics Council have granted permission for the study to be conducted.

Study procedures: Twelve sociology honours students who completed their bachelor's degree in sociology at this university in the preceding year will be recruited for the study. I want to capture your perspectives about the delivery and outcomes of the undergraduate sociology curriculum in an individual interview. During the discussion, I would like to record the conversation using a tape recorder. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits for participating in this study, however the information that you provide might contribute towards the improvement of the undergraduate sociology curriculum in your and other South African universities.

Confidentiality: The information that I will obtain from you will be stored confidentially although it will be shared with my supervisor and co-supervisor who are involved in this study. All students will be anonymised. Excerpts from the interview may be made part of the final dissertation and may also be published in journals.

Risks: There is no major anticipated risk that will be encountered by your participating in this study. If you have any questions pertaining to the study you are free to ask before you sign the consent form below.

Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline the interview. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw your consent and stop the interview at any time without giving reasons.

Asking questions: Before you sign the consent form, please ask me any questions on any aspect of this study that is unclear to you.

Whom to contact: If you have any questions regarding this study, you are advised to contact my supervisor, Professor M. Walker, Telephone 076 434 8820 and Email: walkermj@ufs.ac.za.

Appendix 3: Student consent form

Confidential

Student Consent Form

TITLE OF PROJECT: Sociology, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Capabilities Formation. A case study in one South African University.

I, …….. (Pseudonym) hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information provided by Bothwell Manyonga relating to the study being conducted. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the responses provided.

By signing this form:

I am aware that I have the option of having the interview recorded

I am aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time

I understand that there is no remuneration for my participation

	YES	NO
I am over 18 years old and eligible to participate in this study	□	□
I agree to participate in this study	□	□
I agree to have my interview being audio recorded	□	□

Participant signature _____Date_____

Researcher signature _____Date_____

Researcher email: manyongab@gmail.com Telephone: 079 314 98 28

Appendix 4: Lecturer interview schedule

Research question: What student functionings are valued by sociology lecturers and how do they realise these in constructing their curriculum? To what extent are lecturer curriculum intentions aligned with their pedagogical approaches?

Background information

- Gender
- Race
- Nationality
- First in family to go to University?
- Highest qualification
- In what discipline
- Where obtained
- When obtained
- University experience as a sociologist (e.g. of teaching, research, leadership)
- Current position (e.g. junior lecturer, senior lecturer, professor)

Why did you choose to study sociology (at university)?

Why did you choose to teach sociology at university, and why at this university?

Can you please describe the typical student that you recruit in this department? [Do you enable students to study who might not have been accepted in other subjects or other universities? Why is this?]

Please describe how the curriculum in the department has been designed. [What are the aims? What has influenced the design? How do you translate sociology knowledge into a university curriculum? Who decided what to put in and what to leave out? Can you describe a module or course you have put together?]

Given the design of the curriculum, what kind of graduate do you aim to educate? [What knowledge, skills, values and aspirations are important? Is it important to prepare students for the world of work? Is it important for students to develop commitments to the public good or to citizenship? Are you producing the graduates you would like to? How do you know?]

Has the curriculum or teaching approaches or even students changed much since you were a sociology student? [In what way and why]

To what extent are the curriculum aims aligned with the way lecturers in the department teach sociology? [How do you teach sociology?]

Your department says critical thinking is one of the key curriculum outcomes -can you describe what you do to develop critical students? [Do your students see themselves as people who are critical of society/knowledge? How do you know?]

Are you satisfied with the overall quality of the sociology degree here and with student's success? In what way? Is success affected by race, gender or social class? Does this matter?

Is there anything about the sociology curriculum or teaching sociology that we have not covered that you would like to discuss?

Appendix 5: Lecturer information sheet

Academics (Lecturers/ leading sociologists) information sheet: Sociology curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation: A case study of two South African universities.

My name is Bothwell Manyonga (student number 2013167636). I am a Ph.D. student at the Centre for Research on Higher Education and Development (CRHED) at the University of the Free State. I am researching a project entitled *'Sociology curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation: A case study of two South African Universities'.*

Study aim: My study examines how curriculum knowledge acquired by sociology undergraduate student contributes to the enhancement of their capabilities to live and act in the world. The research comprises three phases: (i) Policy analysis phase, (ii) Sociology curriculum and pedagogy analysis phase, and (iii) a Micro-level analysis phase, at the level of one university Sociology Department. In the first phase, analysis of policy documents and secondary data on Higher Education (HE) and sociology will be undertaken at national and university level. In the second phase, a small number of leading South African sociology academics will be interviewed to discuss the ways in which they view the construction of sociology curriculum and pedagogy in South Africa. In the third phase, sociology lecturers and students will be interviewed to capture their perspectives on curriculum development of sociology, its pedagogical delivery and the student learning outcomes.

Ethics: The University of the Free State Research Ethics Council has granted permission for the study to be conducted.

Study procedures: You have been identified as one of the key staff members by the Sociology Department and you are being asked to participate in this study. I would like to capture your perspectives on the undergraduate sociology curriculum in general, and your own sociology curriculum and teaching in an individual interview. During the discussion, I would like permission to record the conversation using a tape recorder. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes.

Benefits: I hope that the study will generate interesting and useful insights on curriculum development and pedagogies to share with the department.

Confidentiality: The information that I will obtain from you will be stored confidentially, although it will be shared with my supervisor and co-supervisor. All interviewees will be given pseudonyms and the University will also not be named.

Risks: There is no major anticipated risks that will be encountered by your participation in this study. If you have any questions pertaining to the study you are free to ask before you sign the consent form below.

Participation: Participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to decline the interview. If you choose to participate, you have the right to withdraw your consent and stop the interview at any time without giving reasons.

Whom to contact: If you have any questions regarding this study, you are advised to contact my supervisor, Professor M. Walker, Telephone 076 434 8820 and Email: walkermj@ufs.ac.za.

Appendix 6: Lecturer consent form

CONFIDENTIAL

LECTURER CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: Sociology curriculum, pedagogy and capabilities formation: A case study of two South African universities.

I, ……..(Pseudonym) hereby confirm that I have read and understood the information provided by Bothwell Manyonga relating to the study being conducted. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and I am satisfied with the responses provided.

By signing this form:

I am aware that I have the option of having the interview recorded

I am aware that I may withdraw from participation at any time

I understand that there is no remuneration for my participation

	YES	NO
I agree to participate in this study	□	□
I agree to have my interview being audio recorded	□	□

Participant signature _____Date_____

Researcher signature _____Date_____

Researcher email: manyongab@gmail.com Telephone: 079 314 98 28

Appendix 7: Ethics approval

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA
UFS UV

24 April 2015

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPLICATION:

THE SOCIOLOGY CURRICULUM AND CAPABILITIES FORMATION: A CASE STUDY IN TWO SOUTH AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Dear B Manyonga

With reference to your application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence, is:

UFS-EDU-2014-053

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for three years from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension in writing.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research project be submitted in writing to the ethics office to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethical implications that may arise.

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Christa Duvenhage

Faculty Ethics Officer

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Appendix 8: A sample level descriptor

NQF Level Seven	
1.Scope of knowledge,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate: integrated knowledge of the main areas of one or more fields, disciplines or practices, including an understanding of and an ability to apply and evaluate the key terms, concepts, facts, principles, rules and theories of that field, discipline or practice; and detailed knowledge of an area or areas of specialisation and how
2. Knowledge literacy,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an understanding of knowledge as contested and an ability to evaluate types of knowledge and explanations typical within the area of study or practice
3. Method and procedure,	in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate: an understanding of a range of methods of enquiry in a field, discipline or practice, and their suitability to specific investigations; and an ability to apply a range of methods to resolve problems or introduce change within a practice
4. Problem solving,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to identify, analyse, critically reflect on and address complex problems, applying evidence-based solutions and theory-driven arguments
5. Ethics and professional practice,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to take decisions and act ethically and professionally, and the ability to justify those decisions and actions drawing on appropriate ethical values and approaches, within a supported environment
6. Accessing, processing and managing information,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate: an ability to develop appropriate processes of information gathering for a given context or use; and an ability to independently validate the sources of information, and evaluate and manage the information
7. Producing and communicating information,	In respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to develop and communicate his or her ideas and opinions in well-formed arguments, using appropriate academic, professional, or occupational discourse
8. Context and systems,	in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to manage processes in unfamiliar and variable contexts, recognising that problem solving is context- and system-bound, and does not occur in isolation
9. Management of learning,	in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to identify, evaluate and address accurately his or her learning needs in a self-directed manner, and to facilitate collaborative learning processes
10. Accountability,	in respect of which a learner is able to demonstrate an ability to take full responsibility for his or her work, decision-making and use of resources, and limited accountability for the decisions and actions of others in varied or ill-defined contexts

Source: SAQA (2012)